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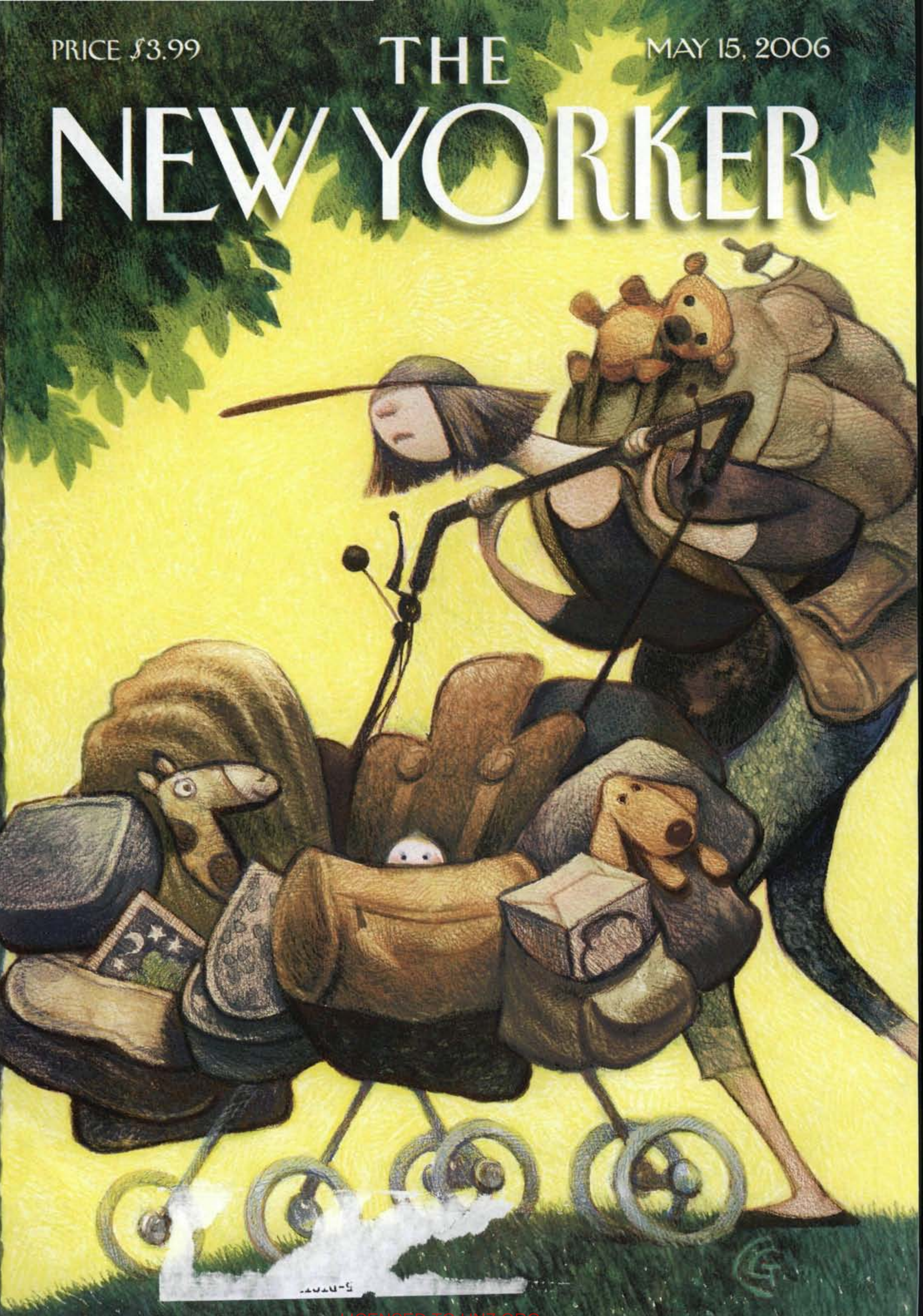

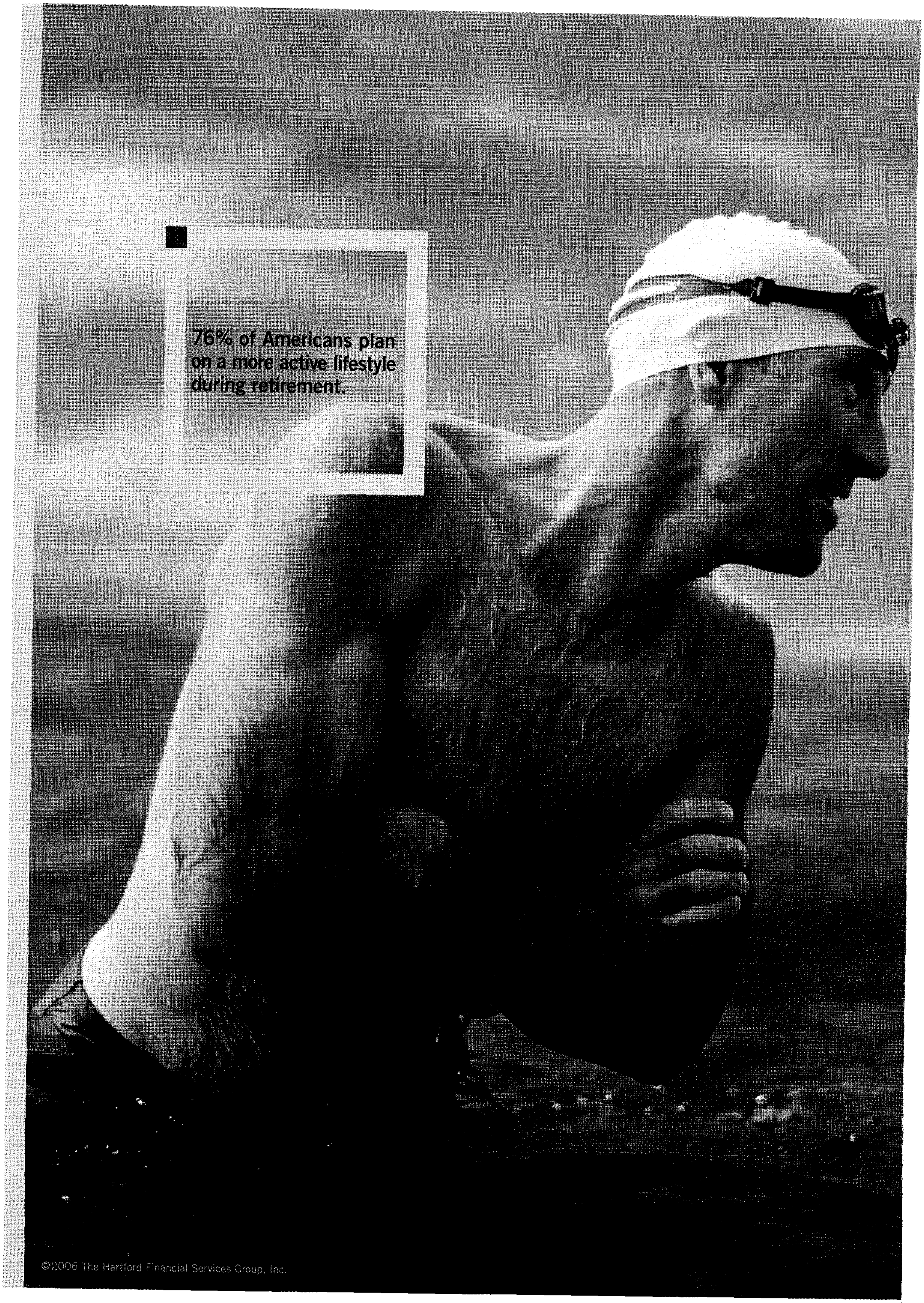
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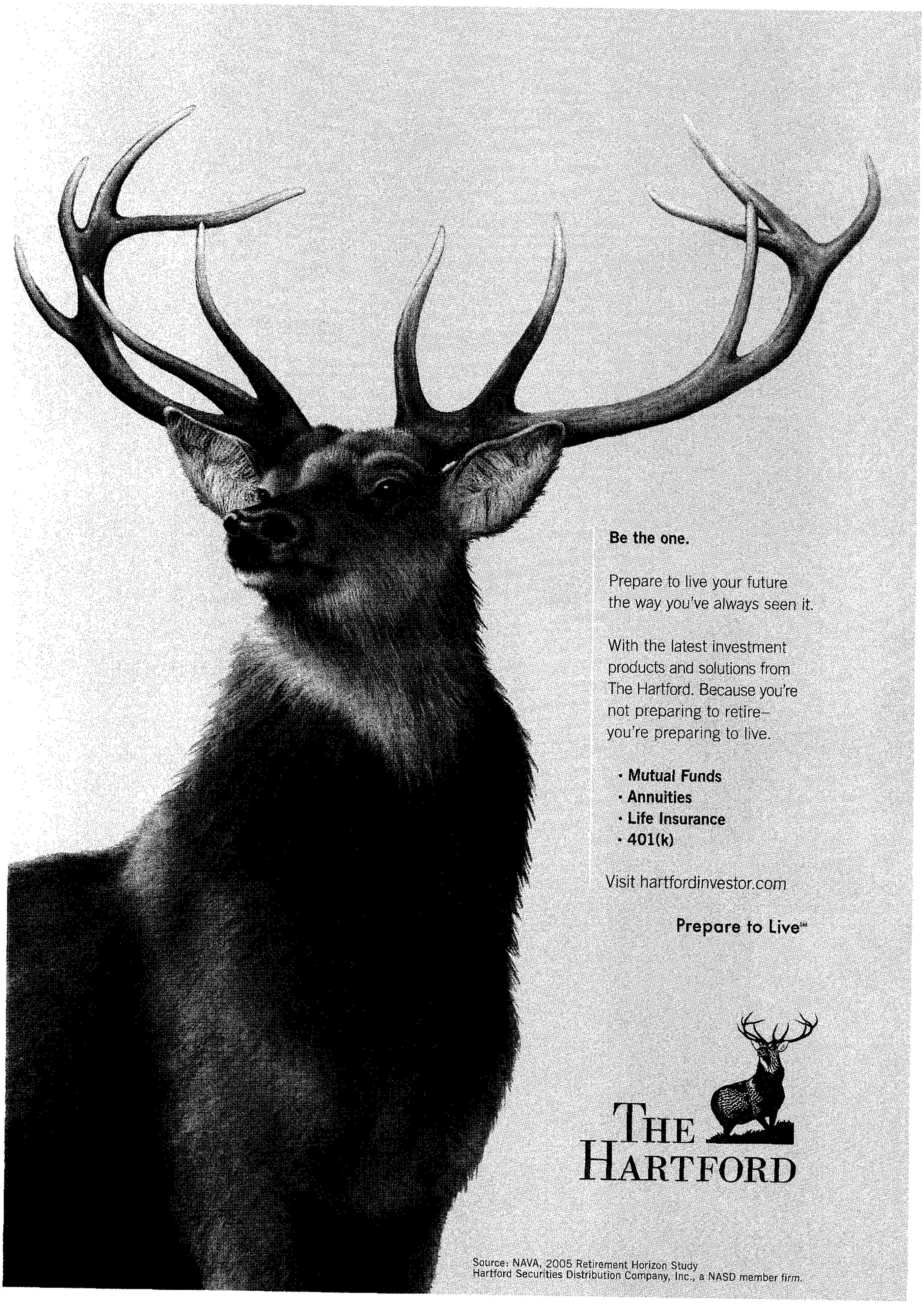

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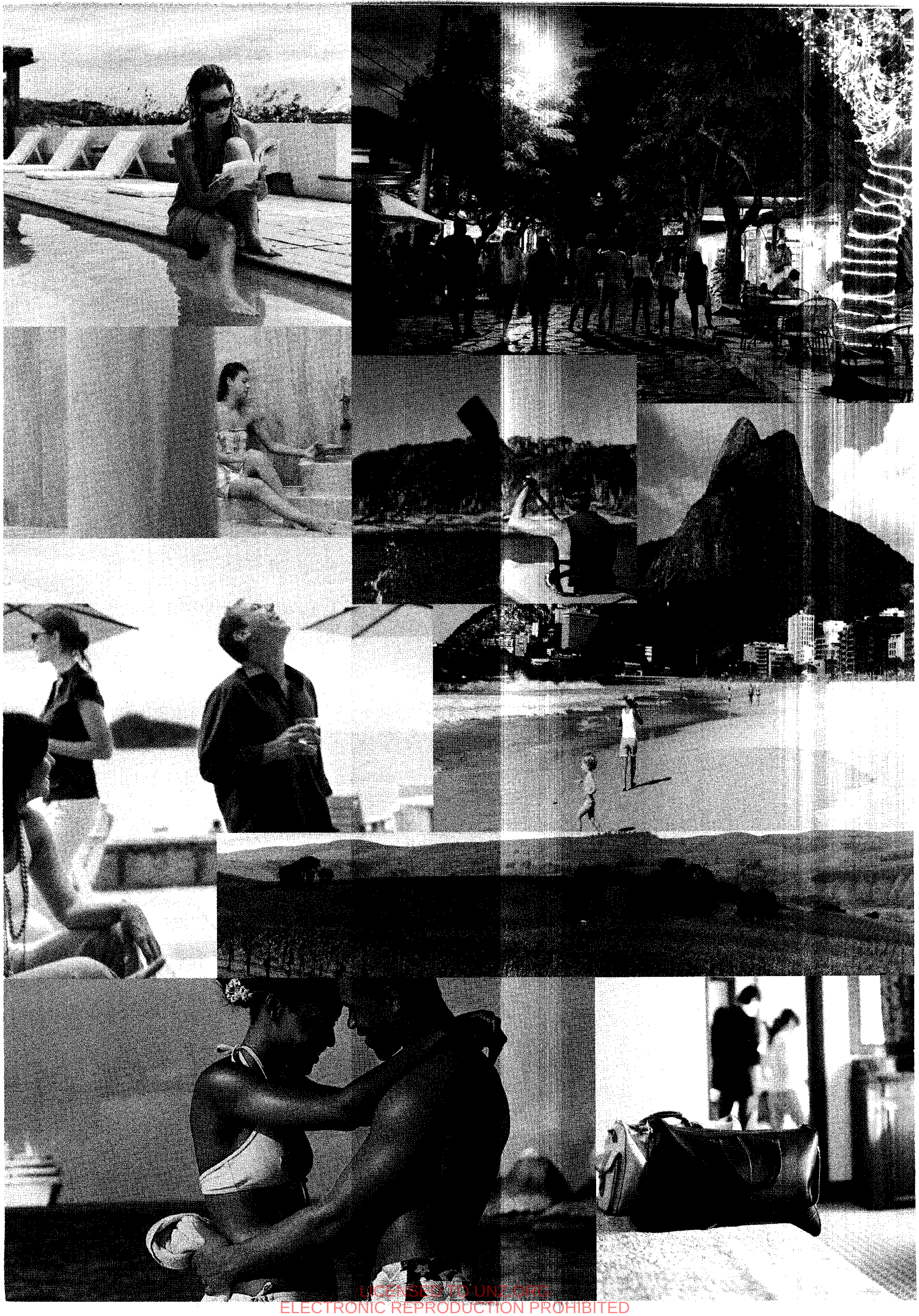

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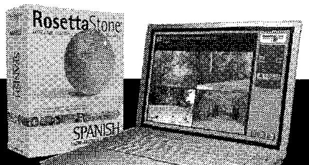

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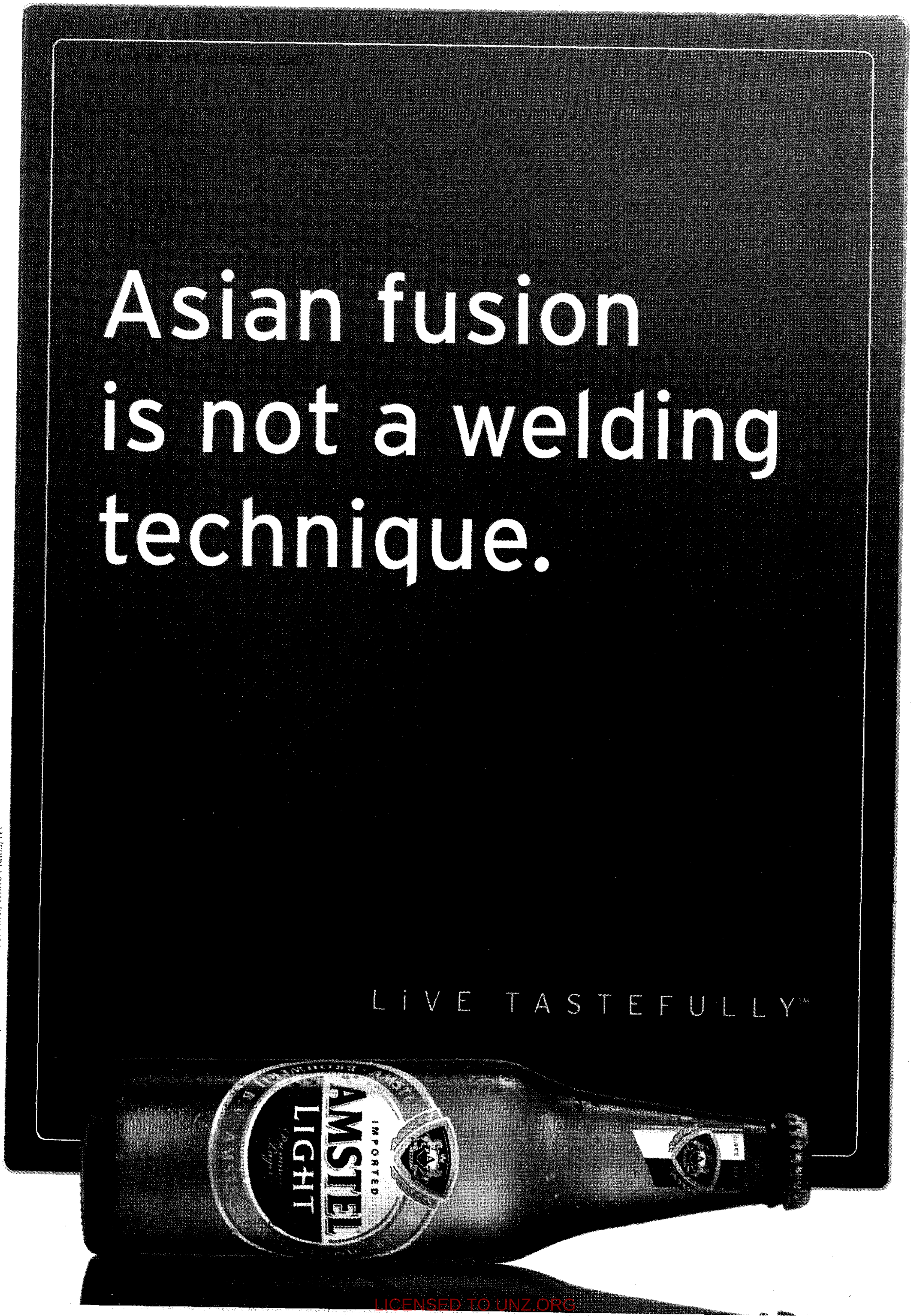
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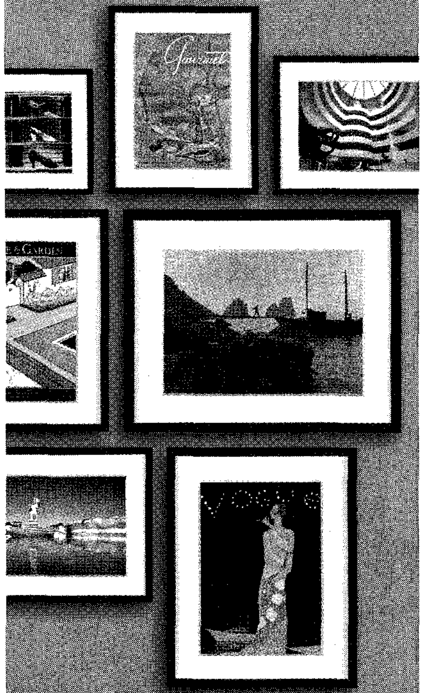

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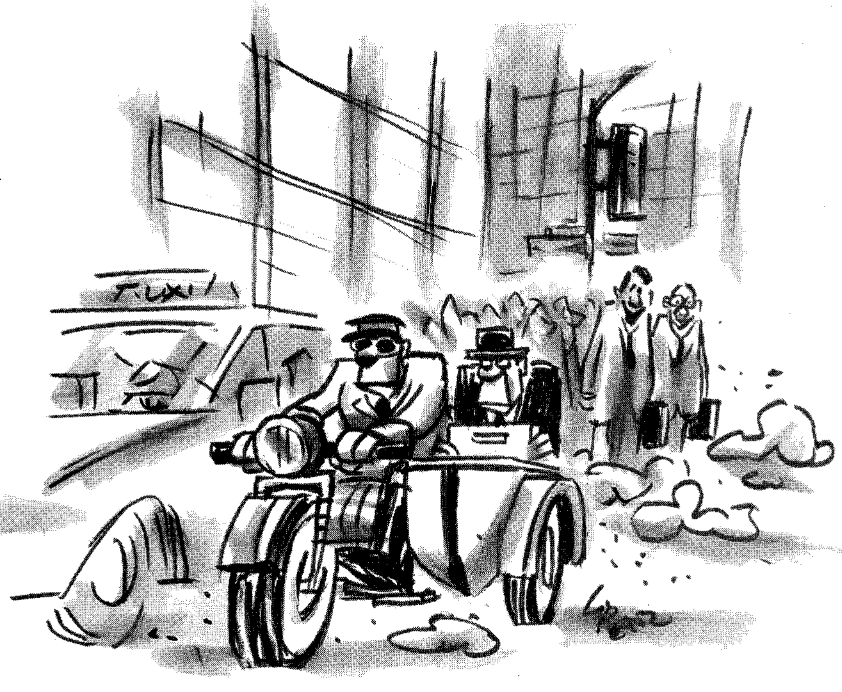
Carter Goodrich (Cover) was the character designer on the animated film "Open Season," to be released in the fall. His first children's book, "A Creature Was Stirring: One Boy's Night Before Christmas," comes out in October. ♦



"By George, Kinkaid is doing his part."

THE MAIL

THE EPISCOPAL DIVIDE

Peter J. Boyer's article on the current divisions within the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion leaves the unfortunate impression that the decision to include gays and lesbians fully in the life of the Church (by amendment of canon law, in 1994) does not have sound theological underpinnings ("A Church Asunder," April 17th). The Episcopal Church has always made moral and theological decisions on the basis of Scripture, tradition, and reason. Of the three, Scripture is the most important, but Scripture requires interpretation. The intrinsic momentum of the Gospel is toward inclusion and freedom because Christ's mission was, and is, to redeem all people. It is certainly true that the Church has traditionally prohibited homosexuality, and there are passages in Scripture that bar some of the acts associated with homosexuality, although Jesus himself says nothing at all about the subject. But, just as the Church finally realized that enslaving fellow human beings was a betrayal of the Gospel, even though there may be Biblical warrant for slavery, the Episcopal Church has recognized that excluding homosexuals from participation in the life and worship of the Church is contrary to the good news of salvation for all people.
The Reverend Alison J. Quin
Derwood, Md.

Boyer fails to capture precisely why conservative American Episcopalians now feel compelled to resort to such desperate tactics. Although the issue happens to be the attempt to rewrite the Bible's definition of sin, the underlying motivation of conservative Episcopalians was born of thirty years of bitter experience with other contentious issues, during which an ostensibly open-minded Church ruthlessly persecuted its conservative dissenters. Until the Church provides alternative Episcopal oversight to conservative parishes trapped in hostile dioceses and effective discipline of renegade local bishops (provisions that presently exist elsewhere in the Anglican Communion), there will be no hope of reconciliation, and ecclesiastical divorce via formal schism will remain a merciful and time-tested alternative.
David W. Rawson
Former Chancellor, Episcopal Synod of America
Berwyn, Pa.

Why open homosexuality represents the uncrossable line is unclear, when Anglicans remain in communion with other Anglicans who countenance and engage in wars of aggression, divorce and remarriage, lending at interest, and other behaviors condemned in the Bible and in Christian tradition. Over time, we may have learned that homosexual relationships can be loving and caring. More important, this perception affects reality, making it easier for society to foster and reward stable and committed same-sex relationships.
Richard Kieckhefer
John Evans Professor in Religion
Northwestern University
Evanston, Ill.

Boyer's otherwise excellent essay offers some controversial interpretations of Scripture. Boyer quotes from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to the effect that neither "homosexuals, nor sodomites . . . will inherit the Kingdom of God." But the Greek terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* do not unambiguously refer to the modern understanding of homosexuality. Such a translation depends on the translator's preference, not on the words themselves.
Ignacio L. Götz
Distinguished Professor Emeritus
New College of Hofstra University
New York City

•

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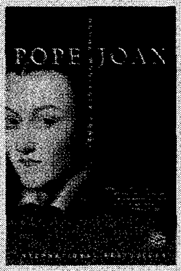

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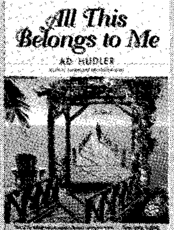

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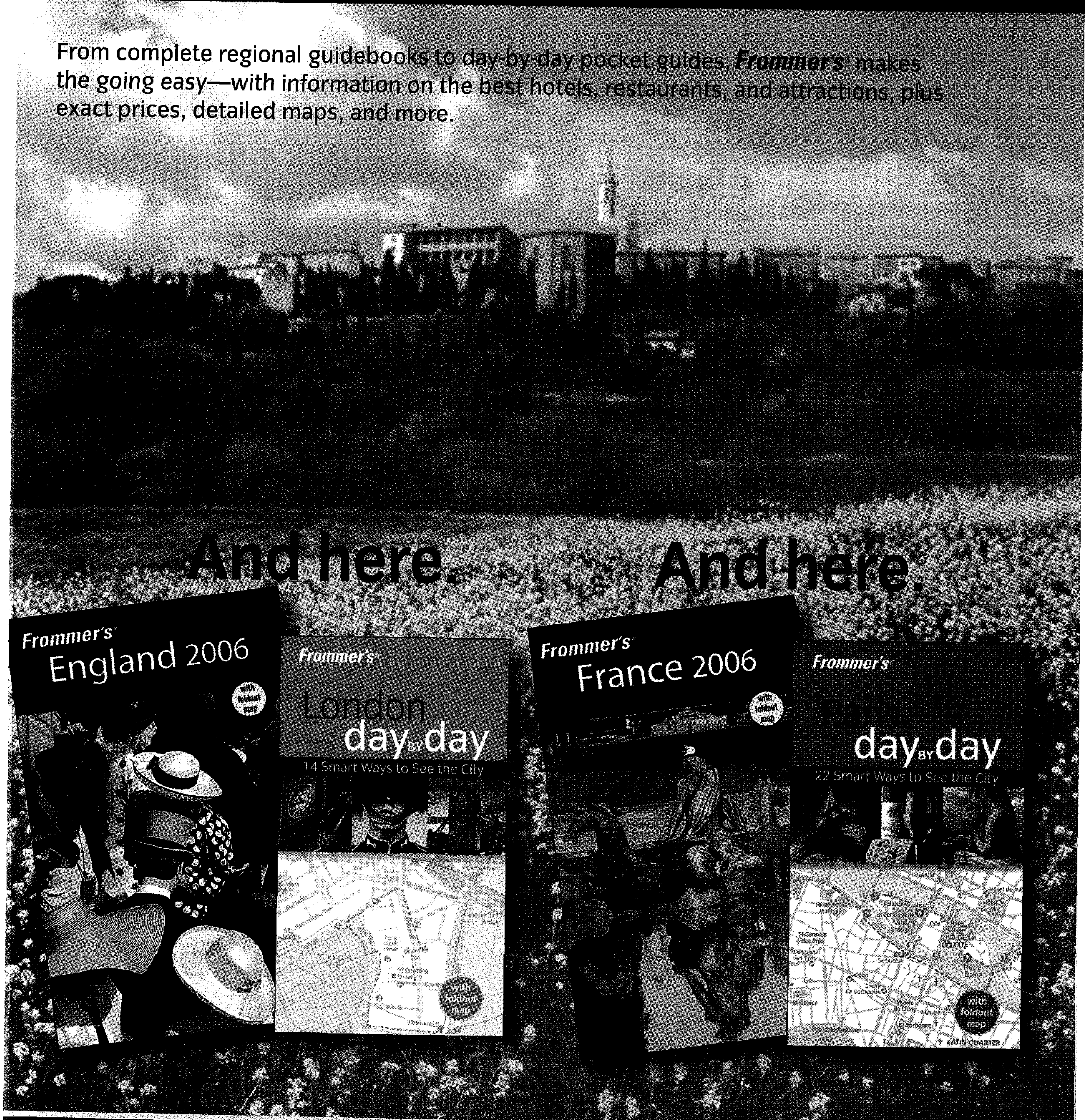

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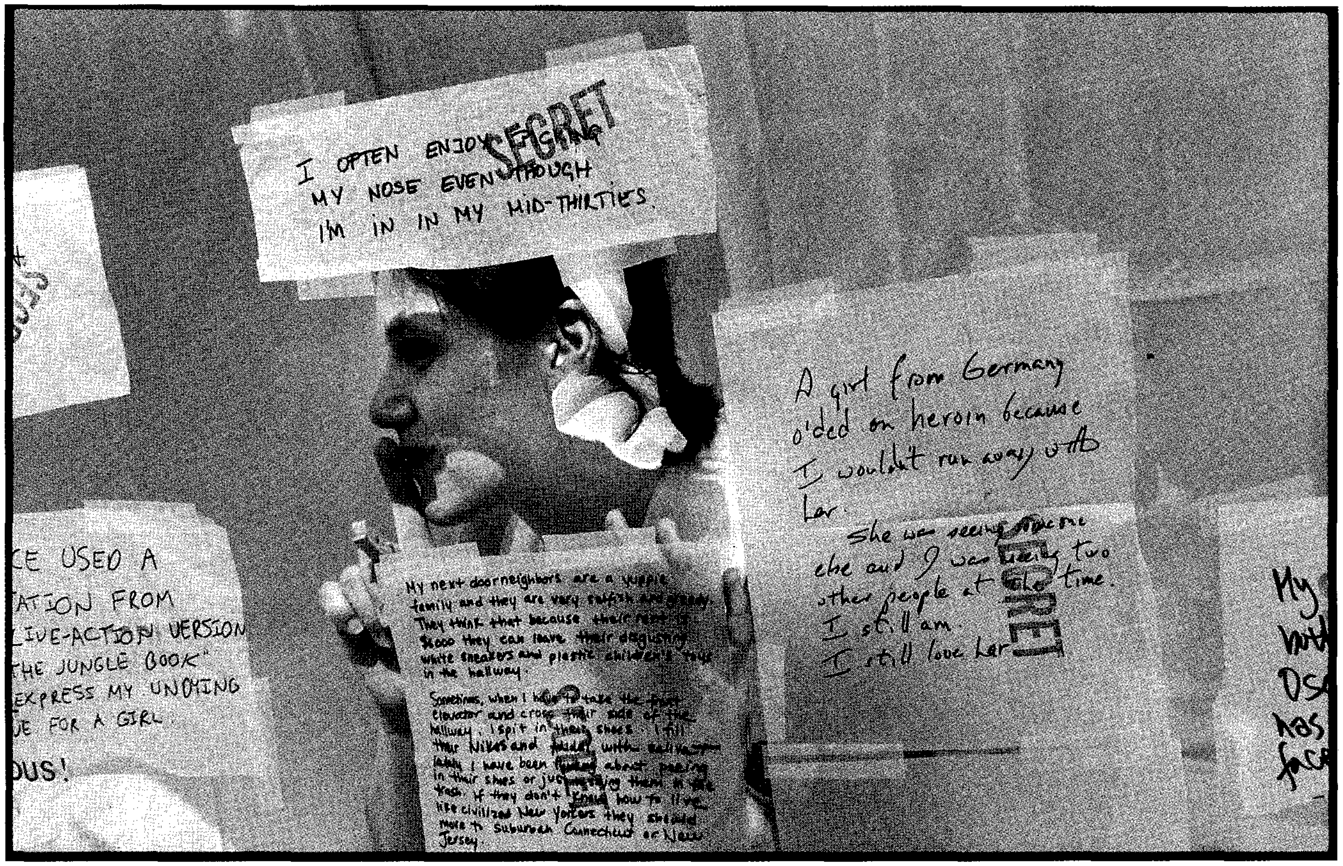
SECRET
I OFTEN ENJOY PICKING MY NOSE EVEN THOUGH I'M IN IN MY MID-THIRTIES
A girl from Germany o'ded on heroin because I wouldn't run away with her. She was seeing someone else and I was seeing two other people at the time. I still am. I still love her.
SECRET

"Inside/Out," a storefront public-art event in midtown. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
14	15	16	10	11	12	13

THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
EARLY SUMMER

The earthy troubadour Jehro may be French, but his music sounds as if it came from the tropics—his voice is like a soft breeze, and his rhythms are redolent of the islands. Jehro, who sings in English and Spanish, makes his first U.S. appearances this week, starting at the Hiro Ballroom. (See page 16.)

ART
UNDAMPENED

The New Orleans Museum of Art was relatively lucky during Hurricane Katrina: its collections were unharmed, and the building and grounds, though damaged, have been repaired enough to be reopened. NOMA is in need of funds, though, and has sent a set of works that cover two centuries of Crescent City art to the AXA galleries as good-will ambassadors. (See page 18.)

DANCE
ANCIENT MOVES

The Indian dance troupe Nrityagram Dance Ensemble performs for two nights at the Skirball Center. The troupe specializes in traditional and modern interpretations of Odissi, a dance form that originated as a sacred dedication to the gods. (See page 21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
THE NATURAL

The ongoing celebration of Mozart's two-hundred-and-fiftieth birthday is a fitting showcase for the talents of the pianist Mitsuko Uchida, who was born in Tokyo and raised in Vienna after her diplomat father was transferred there. Uchida performs a selection of sonatas this week at Carnegie Hall. (See page 22.)

MOVIES
ROSSET'S REEL

In 1964, Barney Rosset, the founder of Grove Press, produced the wordless short "Film," which starred a gaunt, aged Buster Keaton and was based on a script by Samuel Beckett. MOMA presents it along with outtakes narrated by Rosset, Jean Genet's "Un Chant d'Amour" (a homoerotic prison fantasy, distributed by Rosset, that the Supreme Court deemed obscene), and a new film on a text by Ionesco. (See page 27.)

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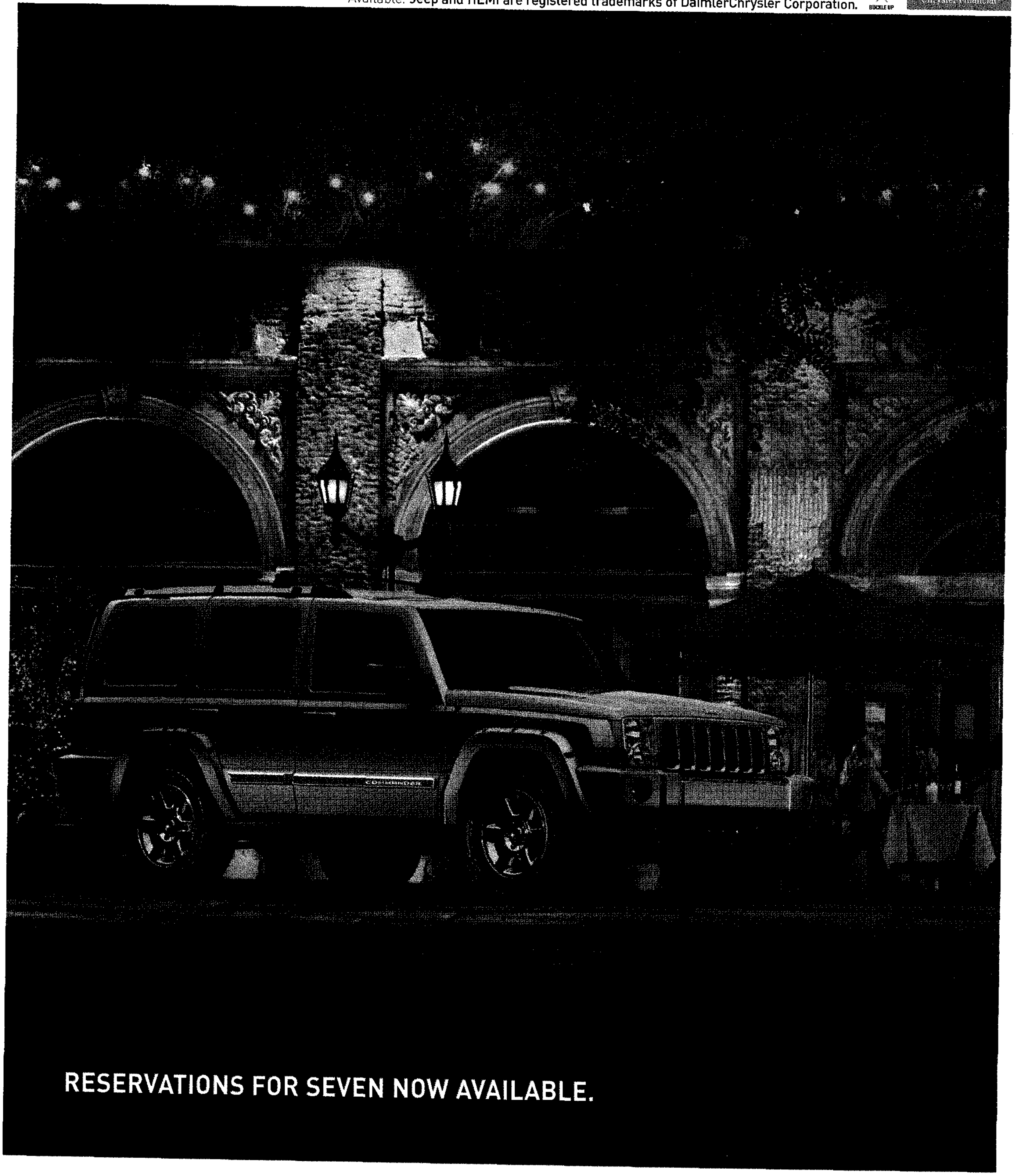
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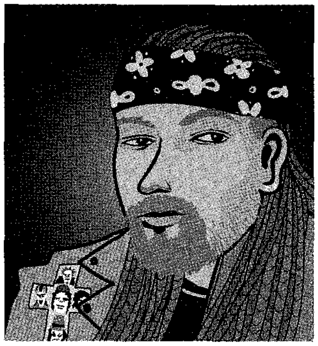
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
STICKING TO HIS GUNS

The likelihood of a Guns N' Roses show happening—even when sold out, as are this week's concerts at the Hammerstein Ballroom—is small. An album called "Chinese Democracy" has been in the works for years and is the Area 51 of rock. By now, Guns N' Roses are one big ontological riddle: if it's only Axl, is it really Guns N' Roses? Rose and some iteration of G.N.R. played at "Rock in Rio" in 2001 and débuted a song called "Madagascar," which used sampled drum loops and snippets of speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr., to create something that sounded very little like Guns N' Roses and a lot like Rose singing over an Enigma track. In another live track available online, Rose thanks the crowd for being gamblers. He knows that the excitement of seeing Guns N' Roses has been replaced by the excitement of possibly not seeing them. At this point, it might be better if Guns N' Roses did not turn up. The original records would keep doing their work, and a riot might ensue, a more accurate (if also more actionable) expression of the band's spirit than whatever music they are, or aren't, making.



MAXIMILIAN BODE

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ANNULLA
Emily Mann's play tells the story of a Polish Jew who passed as an Aryan under the Nazi regime. In previews. Opens May 14. (Theatre at St. Luke's, 308 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

BEAU BRUMMELL
Ron Hutchinson's play about the fashion-forward Englishman is part of the "Brits Off Broadway" series. In previews. Opens May 14. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BILLY CONNOLLY LIVE!
The Scottish comedian presents a standup show at 37 Arts. In previews. Opens May 11. (450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

CAGELOVE
Christopher Denham wrote this drama about a woman who charges her former lover with rape. Adam Rapp (the writer of "Red Light Winter") directs. In previews. Opens May 15. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

COOKING FOR KINGS
Ian Kelly stars in this play based on his best-selling biography of Antonin Carême, the world's first celebrity chef. Part of the "Brits Off Broadway" series. In previews. Opens May 14. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

MACBETH
The Acting Company presents the Shakespeare tragedy, in repertory with "The Three Musketeers." Opens May 11. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-279-4200.)

NO CHILD
Nilaja Sun wrote and performs her examination of the New York City public-school system. Hal Brooks directs. Opens May 10. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NOT A GENUINE BLACK MAN
Brian Copeland's new play tells of his experiences in an African-American family living in an almost exclusively white suburb. Bob Balaban directs. In previews. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

OF THEE I SING
Gershwin's musical, a satire following a Presidential candidate campaigning on the platform of love, is the final entry in City Center's "Encores" season. May 11-15. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

TARZAN
Disney's version of Edgar Rice Burroughs's classic story comes to Broadway. Bob Crowley directs. Opens May 10. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

THE THREE MUSKETEERS
The Acting Company presents a new stage adaptation of the Dumas novel, in repertory with "Macbeth." Opens May 10. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

BRUNDIBAR
Maurice Sendak designed the set and Tony Kushner wrote the libretto for this children's opera, in which a brother and sister, along with a clutch of talking animals, defeat an evil organ grinder. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CAINE MUTINY COURT-MARTIAL
David Schwimmer stars in a revival of Herman Wouk's 1954 play. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

CORTEO
The Italo-Swiss director Daniele Finzi Pasca's entry in the Cirque du Soleil franchise is a Felliniesque dream populated by angels, harlequins, a haggard clown, and the Lilliputian stars of an amateur travelling theatre. Finzi Pasca, a former gymnast who created the closing ceremonies for the Torino Olympics, supplements the jugglers and Cyr wheels with rip-roaring seesaw, tightwire, high-bar, and trapeze acts. But the show's best moments come when he reinvents the genre, mixing mood with the magic—recasting acrobats as a gaggle of kids jumping on the beds, disguising the contortionists as slinky girls dangling from chandeliers, or converting the clown parade into a brass-band cortège. (Randall's Island Park. 800-678-5440.)

THE DROWSY CHAPERONE
A meta-musical about a theatre fan in a reverie over his favorite musical, starring Bob Martin and Sutton Foster. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

FAITH HEALER
Ralph Fiennes, Cherry Jones, and Ian McDiarmid star in a revival of Brian Friel's 1979 play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAUST
David Herskovits directs Target Margin Theatre's production of parts one and two of Goethe's masterpiece. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
In Sir Peter Hall's revival of Oscar Wilde's drawing-room comedy, the young, slightly plump Algernon (Robert Petkoff) has a chum, the somewhat intense Jack (James Waterston), who also appears to go by the name of Ernest. He is the guardian of the innocent Cecily (Charlotte Parry), who must know nothing of his involvement with Algernon's first cousin, Gwendolen (Bianca Amato), a dark-haired urban sophisticate. Lynn Redgrave, as Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen's skeptical mother, understands the play's opera-buffa elements, and she adds to them by taking charge of her role. The play's director, Sir Peter Hall, adds nothing to the play, but he doesn't detract from it by overinterpreting it, either. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/8/06.) (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through May 14.)

J.A.P. CHRONICLES, THE MUSICAL
Isabel Rose wrote, composed, and stars in this musical, about six former bunkmates at a camp reunion. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

LESTAT
What's disappointing about Elton John and Bernie Taupin's musicalization of Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles" isn't that it fails—this one seemed doomed from the start—but that it fails unspectacularly. Shouldn't a vampire musical, much less a bad one, and certainly one that teems with homoerotic and Oedipal overtones, at least provide the pleasure of audacity? The score, a string of angsty, uninteresting ballads, needs a power anthem to propel its histrionic sails, but it just sags. Of the actors, Allison Fischer, as a bloodsucking Veruca Salt type, comes off best, but they all share one crucial asset: the ability to invoke phrases like "the dark gift" and "the crimson kiss" with dead seriousness. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE
The louts and lunatics who inhabit Martin McDonagh's black comedy (which, after a successful run at the Atlantic Theatre Company, has moved to Broadway) are gruesome and unforgettable figures. McDonagh sets his ghoulish satire in 1993, during the Troubles, in an Aran Island cottage, where Wee Thomas, the cat of the terrorist Padraic (David Wilmot), is found murdered. While Padraic is on his way home to nurse the animal, we learn that Wee Thomas was whacked as political payback by the local I.N.L.A. The absurd bloodfest that follows signals the play's psychotic climate, as McDonagh bravely pushes ugliness to the extreme. (3/13/06) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARY STUART
The chief interest in seeing Schiller's 1801 history drama, at the Pearl in a modern translation by Michael Feingold, may be the unfamiliarity of the dramatist's portrait of Queen Elizabeth. American audiences may find this vision of Shakespeare's patroness as vain, weak, and self-deceiving thoroughly unexpected, accustomed as we are to seeing her in a more magisterial light. As jealousy takes its toll, Elizabeth (Carol Schultz) obliquely countenances the destruction of her cousin, the deposed Roman Cath-

olic Queen of Scotland, Mary Stuart (Joanne Camp), who—imprisoned and brought low—shines all the more regally. Under the direction of Eleanor Holdridge, the performances are adequate rather than sparkling, but the play itself offers an austere fascination. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

SHINING CITY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Conor McPherson ("The Weir"), starring Brían F. O'Byrne ("Doubt"), Martha Plimpton, and Oliver Platt. Robert Falls directs. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

SORE THROATS
Even boiling rage is delivered with arch self-consciousness in the director Evan Yionoulis's production of Howard Brenton's study of a dissolved marriage. The curtain rises on the fragile-seeming Judy (Laila Robins), a divorced woman in her forties. Her former husband, Jack (Bill Camp), has come to see her (with the hot-pink panties of his mistress in his pocket), intent on extracting his share of the proceeds from their recently liquidated life together. The play has its sputters of mordant brilliance, but one senses that much of its clammy British brutality is merely the obverse of a culture obsessed with empty civilities. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

A SPALDING GRAY MATTER
The New Group (Naked) presents Michael Brandt's drama, which stems from the events surrounding the death of Spalding Gray. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

TROIKA:
GOD, TOLSTOY AND SOPHIA
This drama by Peter Levy tells of the last days of Leo Tolstoy. (13th Street Repertory, 50 W. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE WEDDING SINGER
The director John Rando brings a clever touch of irony to this energetic musical comedy adapted in the spirit of the 1998 movie, about Robbie (Stephen Lynch), a wedding singer who gets jilted at the altar by his metalhead fiancée (the fierce Felicia Finley), only to fall in love with a kindhearted waitress (Laura Benanti), who is engaged to a rich jerk. Starting with the garish palette of peach, teal, and mauve, the eighties references are legion, encompassing, and not limited to songs, dialogue, hair, costumes, sets, and dance moves. Rob Ashford's splendid choreography adds dimension to the shrewdly written songs, and the performers have chemistry. Especially fine are the incredibly limber Finley and Matthew Saldivar, as Robbie's lunkheaded bandmate Sammy. Over all, as enjoyable and nostalgic as a power walk at the mall. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

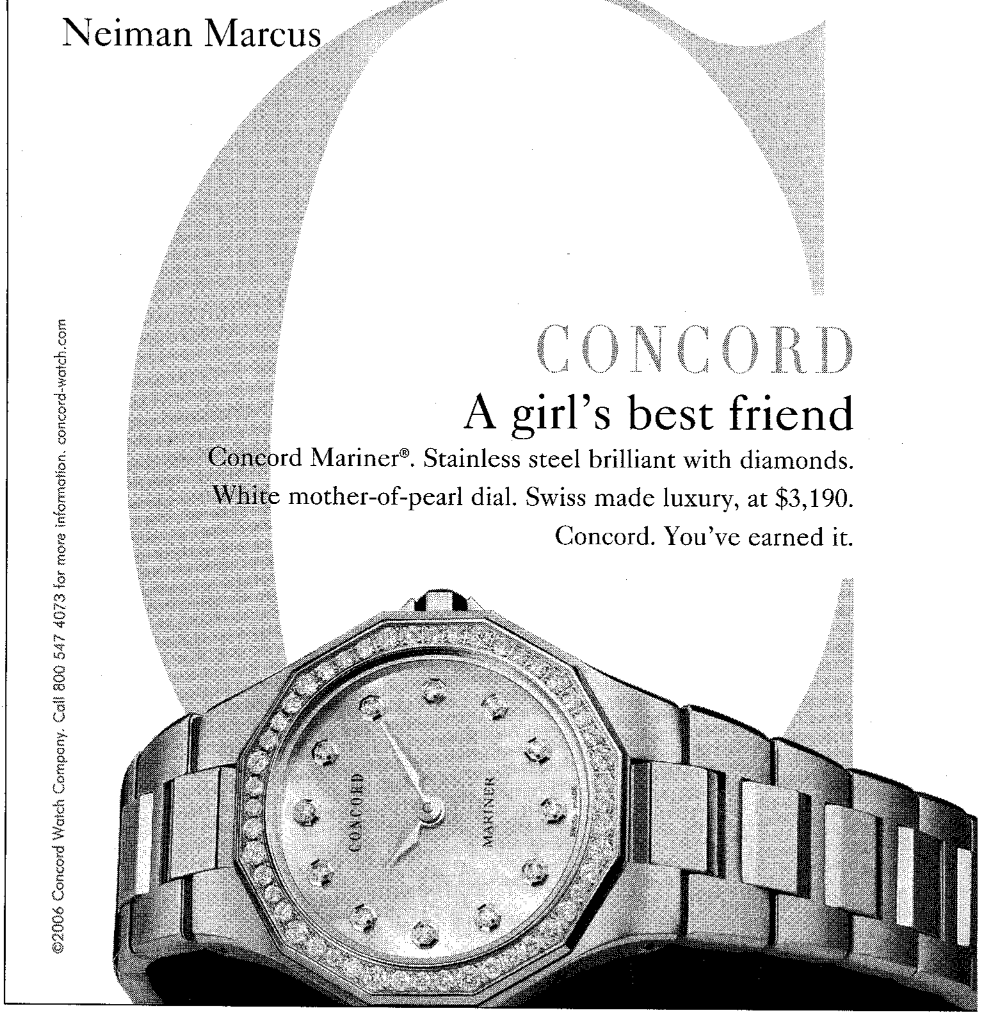
Also Playing

AWAKE AND SING!: Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **LANDSCAPE OF THE BODY:** Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-352-3101. **THE PAJAMA GAME:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **STUFF HAPPENS:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THREE DAYS OF RAIN:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE THREEPENNY OPERA:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **TRYST:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—The rapper Ice Cube, who started his career with N.W.A. and went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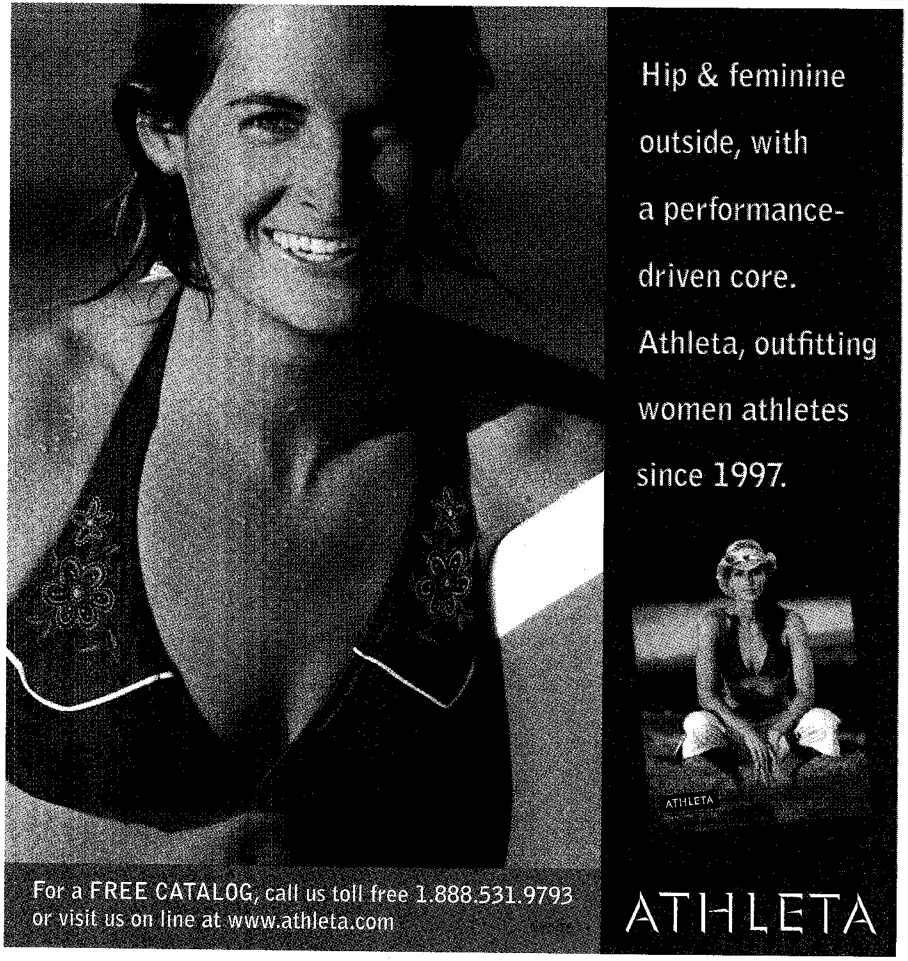
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on to become a successful actor and producer, returns to the music game with his forthcoming solo release, "Laugh Now, Cry Later." He gives a preview of it on May 12.

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—May 12: **Elvis Costello** and the **Brooklyn Philharmonic** present a two-part concert. It starts with the Philharmonic performing the New York première of Costello's orchestral composition "Il Sogno (The Dream)," which is based on Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream." The second half features the Philharmonic, along with the restless pop star himself and the pianist **Steve Nieve.**

The vocalist Karen Akers is in residence at the Algonquin Hotel through May 13.

LISELOTTE WATKINS

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—May 12, May 14, May 15, and May 17: **Guns N' Roses.** Axl Rose, the lone original member of the seminal late-eighties rock band, is back—possibly.

HIRO BALLROOM
The Maritime Hotel, 371 W. 16th St. (212-727-0212)—May 10: "Recall Lab #2," an event organized in part by the French label Recall, presents the first United States appearance of its artist **Jehro.** This singer-songwriter, born Jérôme Cotta, grew up in Marseilles, but his heart lies in the tropics. His self-titled début album is a lovely collection of roots reggae, Cuban *son*, and Latin folk originals, with one cover—Stevie Wonder's jamming "Master Blaster." Following Jehro's early set, the party continues with **Mylo** (a.k.a. Myles MacInnes), a young producer and d.j. from the Isle of Skye, whose first album, "Destroy Rock & Roll," is a lighthearted collection of beats.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 13: The Seattle band **Pretty Girls Make Graves** captures the spirit of vintage punk rock without sounding derivative. The opening act, **Giant Drag,** is the cute duo of Annie Hardy and Micah Calabrese, who keep the younger set's heads bobbing with edgy pop. May 14: **General Patton vs. the X-Ecutioners.** The inexhaustible, highly versatile vocalist Mike Patton, of Faith No More, Mr. Bungle, and Fantômas, recently teamed up with the turntable group the X-Ecutioners for a wild ride into a parallel hip-hop universe.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 12-13: The guitarist and singer **Lucy Kaplansky** is a folk-music veteran who was once a clinical psychiatrist. She has a fetching voice and an insightful perspective on the human condition. May 15: **Jehro** (see the Hiro Ballroom).

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—May 14: **Jehro** (see the Hiro Ballroom). May 16: The mandolinist **Chris Thile,** of Nickel Creek, gives two shows. The first is a solo performance. For the second, he's joined by **Michael Daves,** a local guitarist with a thing for bluegrass. Monday nights: American music is a melting pot with multiple influences, but few guitarists capture the nuances of so many different genres as well as **Jim Campilongo.** Tuesdays in May: The golden-haired Norwegian singer-songwriter **Ane Brun** (born Ane Brunvoll) lives in Stockholm, where her latest album, "A Temporary Dive," is a hit. She takes a sparse approach to personal subjects, and her voice has an earthy twang that's all its own. Saturdays this month: Jazz, blues, and folk mingle nicely in the work of the guitarist and singer **Leni Stern.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 10: The local favorites **Nada Surf** give an acoustic show. May 11: The Canadian heavy-metal band **Priestess** aims to please. By its own admission it wants to bring together "rockers, stoners, loners, nerds, and jocks." No matter what its intentions may be, the band delivers not too heavy drumming, endless guitar riffs, and vocals that are perfectly suited to wasting an afternoon indoors, preferably in the basement.

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—May 13: The meticulous Grateful Dead cover band the **Dark Star Orchestra.**

R&R
416 W. 14th St. (212-675-1661)—May 16: The monthly "Vicious" party, featuring noteworthy New York City bands, presents **Spielerfrau,** the brainchild of the Soviet émigré, former television-news anchor, journalist, and singer-songwriter Michael Idov. The group—which mixes heartfelt Midwestern rock with intelligent lyrics full of Eastern European black humor and irony—recently released its début full-length album, "The Sad Part." Also on the bill are the girl-group-meets-post-punk sounds of the **Affair,** the angular rock of **Nakatomi Plaza,** and the throbbing, nascent guitars of **Brinca Means Jump.**

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—May 12-13: **Mogwai,** deceptively named after the cuddly critters in Spielberg's film "Gremlins," delivers crushingly loud post-rock. The Scottish band is known for relentless experimentation, often through the use of charging guitars, but its latest album, "Mr. Beast," uses a piano. May 16: In the early nineties, the **Charlatans UK** were derided for mimicking the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays, but the Manchester outfit has outlasted those other bands by more than a decade. The Charlatans, who have succeeded with their mix of British rock and dance music, look overseas for material for their latest album, "Simpatico," which adds reggae to their sound.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 13: The chanteuse **Karen Akers** focusses on the songwriting team of John Kander and Fred Ebb, the men who assured us that life is a cabaret.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through June 3: The British vocal stylist **Maria Friedman,** whose rich West End résumé includes a brace of shows from a strong supporter, Stephen Sondheim, takes the stage in the Café Carlyle for a program of his songs. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

"CHAMBER JAZZ"
A night of duets, with the pianist **Kenny Barron** and the vibraphonist **Stefon Harris,** two superior improvisers who work well together, as their efforts in the Classical Jazz Quartet prove. (Merkin Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 10.)

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 9-14: The sextet of the trumpeter **Nicholas Payton** and the trombonist **Vincent Gardner** draws on John Coltrane's landmark 1957 album, "Blue Train," with **Walter Blanding** holding down the crucial tenor-saxophone spot.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—May 9-20: The Broadway standout **Rebecca Luker,** a Tony nominee in 2000 for her role in "The Music Man."

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
The petite chirp of **Blossom Dearie** and the roaring baritone of **Kevin Mahogany** represent two ends of the jazz-vocal spectrum. The two split the bill on May 11 at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center. (199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460.)

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—May 11-14: The **New Jazz Composers Octet,** a historically informed ensemble stocked with fresh instrumental voices, is joined by **Freddie Hubbard.** While still troubled by serious lip problems, the legendary trumpeter always gets a lift from his eager acolytes. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 9-11: The daring and underrated West Coast vocalist **Nancy King** joins the pianist **Fred Hersch,** a brilliant soloist who also ranks among the premier accompanists of our day. May 12-14: The **Dafnis Prieto** quintet. The sought-after Cuban drummer brings together players who share his affinity for

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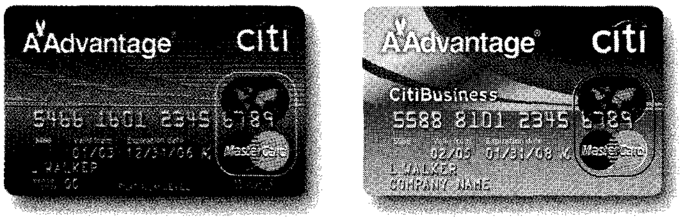

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blending idiomatic Latin music and urban jazz, including the trumpeter **Brian Lynch** (who will be replaced on Sunday by **Avishai Cohen**).

"LOST JAZZ SHRINES"
This concert series celebrating influential nightspots that have long been out of business turns the spotlight on Café Bohemia, the Village club where Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and other greats performed in the nineteen-fifties. It was there, on a Sunday night in June of 1955, that a visiting Floridian sat in on saxophone with Oscar Pettiford. His name was Cannonball Adderley, and his performance made him famous. On May 12, **Louis Hayes's Cannonball Legacy Band** kicks off the series. The drummer Hayes was the motor behind the Adderley unit during its glory days in the early sixties. The band features **Vincent Herring** on alto. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460.)

METROPOLITAN CAFÉ
959 First Ave., at 53rd St. (212-759-5600)—May 9 and May 16: The drummer Chris Parker's band **Toph-E & the Pussycats,** which includes the bassist Will Lee, the percussionist Ralph MacDonald, the keyboardist Clifford Carter, and the saxophonist David Mann, celebrates the release of its first CD, "Toph-E & the Pussycats: Live in Detroit."

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—May 14: "Jazz Greats of the Upper West Side." There may be as many jazz musicians residing in the neighborhood as there are shrinks. **Harry Belafonte** hosts a benefit for Symphony Space featuring, among many others, **Roger Kellaway, Jay Leonhart, Lew Tabackin,** and **Jay Clayton.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 9-14: The trio **Fly.** The saxophonist **Mark Turner** is joined by the bassist **Larry Grenadier** and the drummer **Jeff Ballard,** the rhythm team that also backs the pianist Brad Mehldau. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Art of Betty Woodman."** Through July 30. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden has reopened for the summer, with four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that will produce a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"Samuel Palmer: Vision and Landscape."** A major retrospective, co-organized with the British Museum, reviews the work of the Romantic-era landscape painter Samuel Palmer (1805-81). Through May 29. ♦ The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and forgotten items from the Met's storerooms meet in what Kara Walker calls "the story of Muck." This sad and delicate show, titled **"After the Deluge,"** mixes Walker's own gruesomely satirical silhouettes, gouaches, and writings with a range of historical works to produce a meditation on death by water and the indelible stain of American racial obsessions. Through July 30. ♦ The Met's English period rooms have been filled with mannequins in costumes old and new for **"AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion,"** transforming them into elaborate surreal tableaux. A lady in a pink silk court gown climbs a staircase while maids in shredded Hussein Chalayan cocktail dresses scrub the floors below; a pair of attendants, one in a sober black dress once worn by Queen Victoria, the other in Alexander McQueen and Shaun Leane's sparkly sheath and aluminum-spine corset, stand over the deathbed of a man in red plaid McQueen pants. Mods mingle with dandies at a hunt ball, punks mix it up with dames in a drawing room, and the show as a whole conveys the interconnectedness and the bizarreness of both class and fashion. Through Sept. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—In **"Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking,"** artists from Islamic backgrounds examine their cultures and homelands, mostly from afar. Unexpectedly, perhaps, women reign. Included are works by Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Ghada Amer, Shahzia Sikander, Emily Jacir, and Marjane Satrapi. Through May 22. ♦ The retrospective **"John Szarkowski: Photographs"** presents work by the critic and curator (he worked at MOMA for almost thirty years), from Midwestern scenes of the nineteen-forties through a 2002 shot taken in upstate New York. Through May 15. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8. For the duration of the Munch show, the museum will also stay open until 8 on Saturdays.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"David Smith: A Centennial."** Smith (1906-65) parlayed his experiences as a welder, an employee of the Studebaker company, a painter, and an acolyte of the Cubist movement into tremendous steel sculptures that were championed by Clement Greenberg and have become emblems of American modernism. Through May 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Philippe Vergne and Chrissie Iles curated **"Day for Night,"** the 2006 Biennial. More than a hundred artists are represented, including Pierre Huyghe, Marilyn Minter, Sturtevant, and Troy Brauntuch. Through May 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"William Wegman: Funney/Strange."** This major retrospective goes beyond clever, anthropomorphic photographs of Weimaraners (though those are here, too) with forty years of the artist's paintings, drawings, videos, and films. Through May 28. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a re-creation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of tortoises, frogs, and iguanas like those that he encountered in the Galápagos Islands. Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

DRAWING CENTER
35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—**"Eva Hesse Drawing"** provides a window onto the sculptor's brief but influential career through working sketches, reliefs, and notes. Through July 15. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Goya's Last Works."** Through May 14. ♦ **"Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice."** Through July 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5. The Goya exhibition galleries will stay open until 8 on Friday evenings for the duration of the show.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture,"** a major retrospective focussing on the artist's large-scale latex and fibreglass works, opens May 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—The midtown oasis has reopened after almost three years of renovation and a Renzo Piano expansion. It marks the occasion with **"Masterworks from the Morgan,"** a selection of manuscripts, drawings, books, and seals from the collections. Manuscripts in the Brontë siblings' tiny handwriting, a libretto of "Aida" annotated by Verdi, and Picasso's pen-and-ink portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter

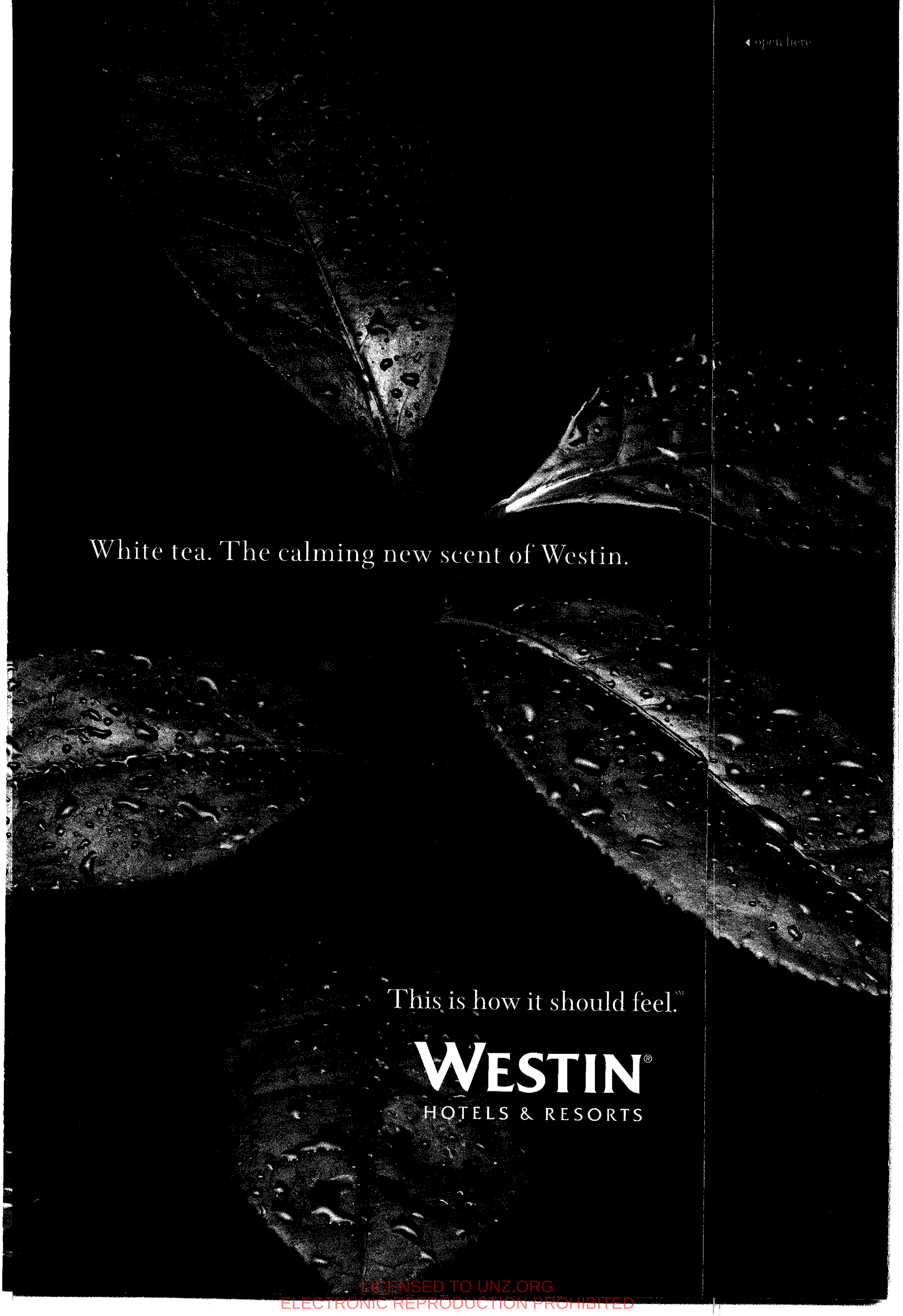
TABLES FOR TWO
BOHEMIAN HALL AND BEER GARDEN

29-19 24th Ave., between 29th and 31st Sts., Astoria (718-274-4925)—Five centuries ago, German brewers began planting trees in their yards to keep the beer cellars below them cool in the summer. Before long, people realized that it would be pleasant to sit under these trees and drink the beer. Eureka: the beer garden. At one point, there were hundreds of beer gardens in New York. Now, there is really only one, in Astoria. (Other contenders, small and mostly treeless, aren't in the same league.) Tended since its opening, in 1919, by the Bohemian Hall, *an adjacent civic center of sorts for the Czechs and* Slovaks who dominated the neighborhood in those days, the garden can seem, once you've had a mug or two and surveyed the polyglot throng, to represent the pinnacle of urban living: variegation meets fermentation.

The garden is connected to a warren of barrooms and dining nooks; this labyrinthine layout can exacerbate the beer's more deleterious effects. The garden itself, however, is easily navigable: an acre of picnic tables, enclosed by stucco walls and shaded by maples and lindens. It accommodates several hundred patrons, including cigarette smokers and little children, and the scene can seem bohemian, with both big and little "B": you may hear "Na zdraví!" or see a T-shirt reading "The liver is evil. It must be punished." But it encompasses all. One recent warm evening, some Fire Department recruits began chanting not very nice things about the N.Y.P.D. Security guards move in when things get out of hand.

Servers pass through from time to time, but they will only fetch food; beer you must get yourself. The food can take a while, and most of it—goulash, schnitzel, "Vepro, Knedlo, Zelo" (roast *pork with sauerkraut and dumplings)—is best in*gested solely for the purposes of beer absorption. The kielbasa, however, is first-rate, spicy and firm, and right up there, the kielbasa connoisseurs say, with the best in Queens. There really isn't any need for anything else, unless you're trying to make a point, in which case custom calls for fried cheese, with ham and tartar sauce. There ought to be places like this all over town. Maybe our graveyards should be beer gardens. (Open Mondays through Fridays for dinner, weekends for lunch and dinner. Entrées $5.75-$14.50.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

◂ open here
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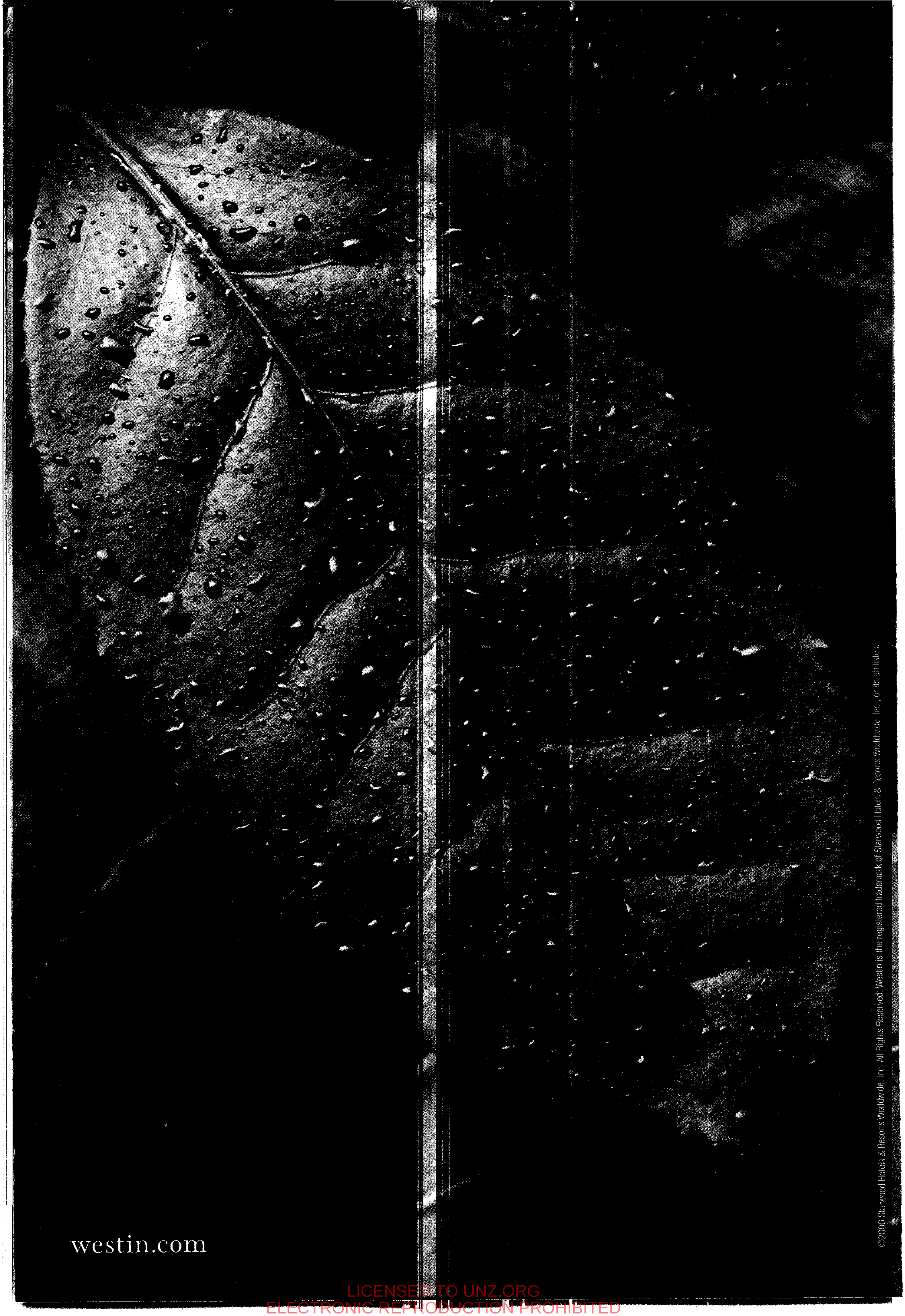

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are among the items on display. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ANTONI TÀPIES
A Spaniard who came of age as an Informel artist in the fifties, Tàpies (b. 1923) sticks to those core principles of material and surface. The current paintings are as dark and rustic as the Catalonian countryside and are filled with figurative fragments and sgraffito. Marble dust and resin caked on the canvases resemble mounds of sand and earth. One even includes a smeared dab of soil, into which the words *formació del peu* ("formation of the foot," in Catalan) are inscribed, backward. Hands and feet drawn in outline conjure both ancient vase fragments and Picasso's post-Cubist turn toward classicism. But in Tàpies's aesthetic one can also see the seeds of eighties neo-expressionism—the moody gesturalism of Francesco Clemente, and Julian Schnabel's grandiose, plate-encrusted canvases. Through June 3. (PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

"THE BIG EASY IN THE BIG APPLE"
The New Orleans Museum of Art made it through Hurricane Katrina with its collections intact, but it sustained six million dollars in structural damage and had to lay off eighty-five per cent of its staff. As part of a campaign to raise funds and awareness, it has sent more than a hundred works north, to the AXA galleries, where New Yorkers can get a look at some of what NOMA hopes to preserve and continue to present: two centuries' worth of paintings, sculpture, and photography, including an Acadian hope chest circa 1820, Pierre Joseph Landry's Nadelmanesque carving of a frock-coated man spying on a pretty bather, vintage photos by Walker Evans and Diane Arbus, and contemporary local artists' depictions of their post-diluvial city. Through May 20. (787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. 212-554-4818.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

OLIVO BARBIERI
Hovering in a helicopter above Rome and Las Vegas, Barbieri took aerial views of landmarks, including the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Piazza del Popolo, and the huddled skyscrapers of the New York, New York casino. This wouldn't be worth noting had the photographer not made use of his camera's selective focus and left large swaths of these landscapes in a swoony fog. The effect is seductive, even on a grand scale. (It also looks pretty snazzy in the two brief films projected continuously here.) But when an image appears at once matter-of-fact and utterly unbelievable, the viewer is left questioning every tiny tree, every passing pedestrian, and the slippery nature of photographic reality. Through May 13. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

JESSE BRANSFORD / DAVID MORENO / GINA MAGID
Three concurrent solo shows grapple with psychodynamic visual shorthand in very different registers. Bransford's wall drawing looks like a schematic model of the universe, except that infinity's core is imagined as a vase of roses, with a little playing-card king and queen floating in its belly. Moreno's photographs are shot directly off a staticky television screen by a spinning camera, creating tracer-like lines of dotted white on dense black grounds. For Magid, the totems are wild animals—a hawk, a tiger, a stag—painted with flashy, mournful, rock-and-roll intensity in mixed media. Through May 13. (Feature, 530 W. 25th St. 212-675-7772.)

HARRY DODGE AND STANYA KAHN
These videos mark their art-world début, but both Dodge and Kahn have been performing—onstage, in independent films, and in other venues—for more than a decade. The experience shows. "Can't Swallow It, Can't Spit It Out" casts Dodge in the roll of documentarian, while Kahn is a latter-day Valkyrie (complete with Viking helmet and bloody nose) stalking through Los Angeles on an epic, unorthodox tour. "The Ugly Truth" finds Kahn submitting to Dodge's off-camera direction, assuming contorted poses while accompanied by the hits of Journey and Van Halen; in "Whacker," she attacks a vacant urban tract with a lawn implement. Combining the tricks of standup comedy, performance art, and film, the videos are simultaneously daffy and boldly assured. Through May 13. (Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545.)

JASON DODGE
If you're willing to count the press release as integral to the art, Dodge's show is quite beautiful—though without its information, the objects don't make sense. The text explains that various uninflected gray photographs were made by having eight of the artist's friends expose photo paper to the sun on the vernal equinox in different spots around the world. The pile of candles and light bulbs in the middle of the floor represents every device of illumination in a house in the Black Forest—pilfered, also on Dodge's instructions, by a friend. A grid of white silk panels was sewn by a tailor and carried around the world by an airline pilot, again both on commission. You get the idea. The collaborative synchrony is appealing, and once annotated the objects emit an enigmatic glow, though their sculptural presence is minimal. Through May 20. (Kaplan, 525 W. 21st St. 212-645-7335.)

SZE TSUNG LEONG
There are almost no people in Leong's broad photographic vistas of Beijing, Nanjing, Chongqing, and other rapidly expanding Chinese cities, but their dwellings crowd the frame. From his elevated perspective, these ghost towns reveal layers of ancient, modern, brand-new, and still unfinished buildings, the oldest often no more than flattened ruins or half-demolished structures surrounded by towering, anonymous apartment blocks. In the relentless, heartless thrust of progress, history gets crushed, along with hundreds of modest brick homes from the imperial period. Leong records their passing with great care and pained resignation. Through May 13. (Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)

LISA RUYTER
Ruyter is a pioneer of the stylish, computer-assisted painting that thrived in the nineties, hovering on the edge of art and graphic design. Given her sharp color sense, it's a bit of a letdown to see her return to black-and-white, although the new paintings make a case for it. They borrow their conceit from a declaration in Christopher Isherwood's "Goodbye to Berlin," from 1939: "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. . . . Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed." Since all the canvases feature Ruyter as the subject, she turns that concept around a bit, becoming both subject and object, the one performing for the "camera," as well as doing the "printing" and fixing her image for posterity. Through May 13. (Team, 527 W. 26th St. 212-279-9219.)

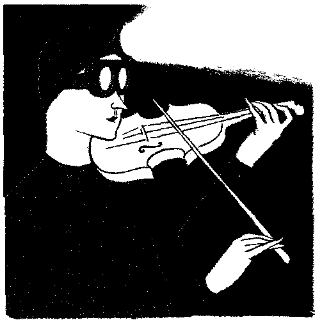
ARTHUR TRESS
Tress, best known for two sequences of increasingly homoerotic dream images from the nineteen-seventies, shows the haunting group of photographs that immediately preceded them. Searching out "Open Spaces in the Inner City," Tress turned a project on New York's unoccupied margins into an essay on the vernacular environment and the urban surreal. Echoes of André Kertész, Walker Evans, and Lisette Model fade into more personal and peculiar visions of isolated figures—often preternaturally cunning young boys—adrift in the city. One teen-ager sits astride a telephone pole floating in the river and slugs a beer like a punk Poseidon. Through May 13. (Clamp, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

PAOLO VENTURA
The photographs in Ventura's extraordinary "War Souvenir" series, exhibited here for the first time, recreate imaginary moments toward the end of the Second World War in Italy: suicides, seductions, and deaths, as well as everyday scenes of life during wartime. Working with meticulously realistic scale-model figures, objects, and settings that he crafts himself, Ventura evokes an atmosphere of decadence and dread unusual for such fabricated setups. In spite

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
CANAL ZONE

Last year, the art/performance space Issue Project Room moved from the East Village to an old storage silo on the Gowanus Canal, a famously murky waterway in the wilds of industrial Brooklyn. It is a strange and wonderful place to hear music, and the ensemble Ne(x)tworks, in a recent performance of Kenji Bunch's new conceptual opera, "Confessions of the Woman in the Dunes," made the most of it. The work, based on Kobo Abe's classic novel about a woman trapped in a condition of existential solitude, begins in claustrophobic blackness. The title character, who is played by the composer-vocalist Joan La Barbara, sings and cries and taps her way through the dark, with instruments gradually joining in. Soon, as light flickers from miner's lamps on the players' heads, the audience is engulfed in a semi-improvised swirl of sound, and La Barbara performs a fragmentary aria and dance. Toward the end, tendrils of melody hover in the air, a few rich chords sound on the piano, and the lights go out again. Ne(x)tworks returns to Gowanus on May 17, with La Barbara's opera "WoolfSong."

—Alex Ross

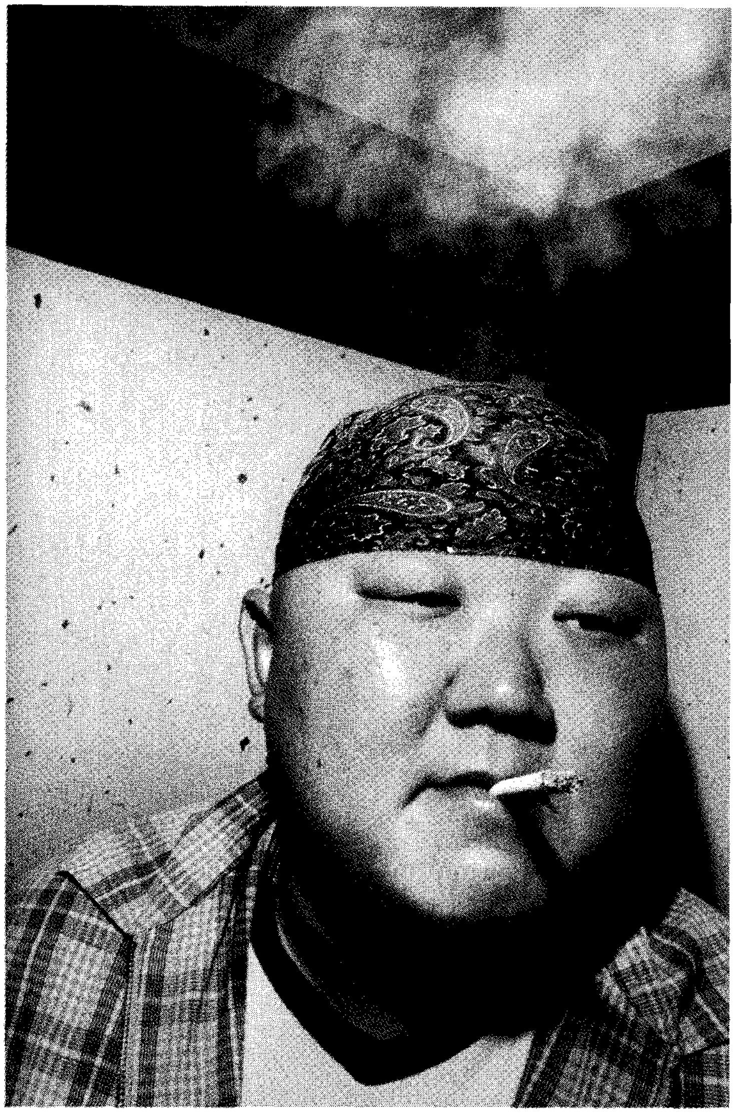


GRANT SHAFFER

of the work's unnecessarily large scale, its artifice is weirdly convincing, not as photojournalism but as neorealist cinema. These might be outtakes from De Sica or Rossellini films, or terribly unnerving recovered memories. Through May 20. (Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0008.)

Short List

BRUCE GILDEN: Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through June 3. **JOHN WATERS:** Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889. Through May 20. **BETTY WOODMAN:** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999. Through May 27.



"Man Smoking Cigarette, Tokyo," by Bruce Gilden, at Silverstein.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ROBERT BOYD
Found footage of recent events is edited into a macabre, at times comical fantasy in "Xanadu," a suite of projected videos that pair ranting politicians, evangelicals, and self-appointed messiahs with a pounding disco soundtrack. The point is that entertainment culture has become a spiritual supplement for consumerist society (with Disney and Hello Kitty as new objects of worship) and that most promises of salvation in the modern world have ended rather badly. He could have skipped rehashing the usual list of "evil" suspects—Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein—but this visual and aural onslaught makes it chillingly clear that prejudice and hate, rather than peace and love, are the universals by which the world, in all its multicultural differences, seems united. Through May 14. (Participant, 95 Rivington St. 212-254-4334.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

KEN BUTLER
Butler is a modern anti-Stradivarius, dedicated to constructing stringed instruments not from fine woods chosen for their acoustic advantage but from found objects of every conceivable stripe: rakes, toy guns, fan grilles, saws, brooms, old furniture—even a laptop, a chess set, and hockey sticks. Function is another issue. A separate stash of instruments outfitted with guitar pickups and other enhancements will be brought into the gallery for periodic performances. Most of the objects on view, like his grand pianos made from Styrofoam, egg cartons, and tree branches, perform best as sculpture in the vein of Cubist and Surrealist experimentation. One collage, which includes Man Ray's famous photo of the French chanteuse Kiki as a violin, serves as direct homage. Through May 15. (Sideshow, 319 Bedford Ave. 718-486-8180.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The week is dominated by new works created for the "Diamond Project": Eliot Feld's "Étoile Polaire" and Mauro Bigonzetti's "In Vento" will be performed, and at the spring gala on Wednesday new works by Peter Martins and Christopher Wheeldon will receive their premières. Both choreographers will be working with composers they have never used before (John Corigliano and Bartók, respectively), and both musical compositions are concerti (Corigliano's Concerto for Violin, based on the music for the movie "The Red Violin," and Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 3)—in other words, large, complex works. Martins's piece (also called "The Red Violin") will feature the principals Jennie Somogyi and Sébastien Marcovici (as well as Sara Mearns and Amar Ramasar, both recently promoted to soloists), and Wheeldon has cast Miranda Weese and the dashing Damian Woetzel in his ballet "Evenfall." ♦ May 10 at 7:30 (spring gala): "The Red Violin" (première) and "Evenfall" (première). ♦ May 11 at 8: "Mother Goose," "Étoile Polaire," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ May 12 at 8: "In the Night," "Étoile Polaire," and "Western Symphony." ♦ May 13 at 2: "Mother Goose," "Evenfall," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ May 13 at 8: "In the Night," "In Vento," and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 14 at 3: "Intermezzo," "The Red Violin," and "Western Symphony." ♦ May 16 at 7:30 (an all-Balanchine program): "Liebeslieder Walzer" and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 25.)

MOMIX
In Moses Pendleton's 1991 multimedia classic, "Passion," the lush visuals can be arresting: a girl swirls a long red ribbon, dancers bend long poles into gorgeously lit arcs, and bodies are silhouetted against their own umbrellas. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. May 9-12 at 8, May 13 at 2 and 8, and May 14 at 2 and 7:30. Through May 28.)

RACHID OURAMDANE
The French-Algerian choreographer began work on "Les Morts Pudiques" ("Discreet Deaths") by entering the title of Roland Petit's famous ballet "Le Jeune Homme et la Mort" into an Internet search engine. From the results, he's fashioned a sophisticated performance piece for himself filled with vivid, unsettling images of young men and death. Inside a kind of boxing ring made out of three plasma screens connected by transparent plastic tubing, he dons a motorcycle jacket, delicately partners a half-size model of himself, and injects colored liquid into blood-transfusion bags strapped to his body. The tricolored fluid, the North African drumming, and the multiple masks all make for a subtle, shifting display of immigrant identity. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 11-13 at 7:30.)

MISNOMER DANCE THEATRE
"Throw People," the title of Chris Elam's new two-part dance, can be read partly as an imperative. People are thrown and twisted into human origami and tied into three-person pretzels with only two feet on the ground. Elam's wonderfully strange and unpredictable choreography, however, makes his dancers seem less like people than anthropomorphized beasts. The first section, filled with mock-balletic gestures, suggests the preening animals of "Fantasia." The second, for which Andy Teirstein's score is performed live on eclectic instruments, is rougher; its pas de deux could be between a giraffe and an orangutan. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. May 11-12 at 8, May 13 at 5 and 8, and May 14 at 5.)

HEIDI LATSKY DANCE
All the elements of Latsky's wide-ranging new ensemble piece, "Disjointed"—including the old-time music, the hats, the quivering arms, and Latsky's own turn as a living witness—relate back to her mother, who died of a brain tumor in December, 2004. In the starkly lit sanctuary of St. Mark's Church, surrounded by crumpled Kleenex, three dancers in black fight through stages of suffering and grief while a white-clad Greek chorus of thirty performs a joyful big-band hat parade and Latsky's signature 1993 solo, "Grace." Jeffrey Freeze does a shaky-armed solo to "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg," Nathan Trice and Latsky dance a concentrated duet (guest-choreographed by Séan Curran), and Latsky performs a final, intense solo while an old film of her dancing—pregnant and topless—flickers on the altar. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. May 11-14 at 8:30.)

NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE
Last season, the choreographer Surupa Sen and her devoted troupe (who live together in an ashram-like setting near Bangalore) dazzled New York audiences with their richly pliant variations on Odissi, a sacred Indian temple dance. Now the company returns with the new "Sacred Space," a collection of undulating solo and group dances exploring Odissi's connections to prayer, tribal cultures, and the romantic Sanskrit ballad "Geet Govind." Dressed in vibrant costumes, the six dancers curve their limber hands and hips to the accompaniment of traditional

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Patients taking aspirin and the elderly are at increased risk for stomach bleeding and ulcers.

Tell your doctor if you:
- Are pregnant
- Have a history of ulcers or bleeding in the stomach or intestines
- Have high blood pressure or heart failure
- Have kidney or liver problems

People with aspirin-sensitive asthma or allergic reactions due to aspirin or other arthritis medicines or certain drugs called sulfonamides should not take CELEBREX.

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Medication Guide
for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

(See the end of this Medication Guide for a list of prescription NSAID medicines.)

What is the most important information I should know about medicines called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death.

This chance increases:

- with longer use of NSAID medicines
- in people who have heart disease

NSAID *medicines should never be used right before or after a heart* surgery called a "coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)."

NSAID medicines can cause ulcers and bleeding in the stomach and intestines at any time during treatment. Ulcers and bleeding:

- can happen without warning symptoms
- may cause death

The chance of a person getting an ulcer or bleeding increases with:

- taking medicines called "corticosteroids" and "anticoagulants"
- longer use
- smoking
- drinking alcohol
- older age
- having poor health

NSAID medicines should only be used:

- exactly as prescribed
- at the lowest dose possible for your treatment
- for the shortest time needed

What are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines are used to treat pain and redness, swelling, and heat (inflammation) from medical conditions such as:

- different types of arthritis
- menstrual cramps and other types of short-term pain

Who should not take a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?

Do not take an NSAID medicine:

- if you had an asthma attack, hives, or other allergic reaction with aspirin or any other NSAID medicine
- for pain right before or after heart bypass surgery

Tell your healthcare provider:

- about all of your medical conditions.
- about all of the medicines you take. NSAIDs and some other medicines can interact with each other and cause serious side effects. **Keep a list of your medicines to show to your health care provider and pharmacist.**
- if you are pregnant. **NSAID medicines should not be used by pregnant women late in their pregnancy.**
- if you are breastfeeding. **Talk to your doctor.**

What are the possible side effects of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

Serious side effects include:

- heart attack
- stroke
- high blood pressure
- heart failure from body swelling (fluid retention)
- kidney problems including kidney failure
- bleeding and ulcers in the stomach and intestine
- low red blood cells (anemia)
- life-threatening skin reactions
- life-threatening allergic reactions
- liver problems including liver failure
- asthma attacks in people who have asthma

Other side effects include:

- stomach pain
- constipation
- diarrhea
- gas
- heartburn
- nausea
- vomiting
- dizziness

Get emergency help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- chest pain
- weakness in one part or side of your body
- slurred speech
- swelling of the face or throat

Stop your NSAID medicine and call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- nausea
- more tired or weaker than usual
- itching
- your skin or eyes look yellow
- stomach pain
- flu-like symptoms
- vomit blood
- there is blood in your bowel movement or it is black and sticky like tar
- skin rash or blisters with fever
- unusual weight gain
- swelling of the arms and legs, hands and feet

These are not all the side effects with NSAID medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information about NSAID medicines.

Other information about Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

- Aspirin is an NSAID medicine but it does not increase the chance of a heart attack. Aspirin can cause bleeding in the brain, stomach, and intestines. Aspirin can also cause ulcers in the stomach and intestines.
- Some of these NSAID medicines are sold in lower doses without a prescription (over-the-counter). Talk to your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter NSAIDs for more than 10 days.

NSAID medicines that need a prescription

Generic Name	Tradename
Celecoxib	Celebrex
Diclofenac	Cataflam, Voltaren, Arthrotec (combined with misoprostol)
Diflunisal	Dolobid
Etodolac	Lodine, Lodine XL
Fenoprofen	Nalfon, Nalfon 200
Flurbiprofen	Ansaid
Ibuprofen	Motrin, Tab-Profen, Vicoprofen (combined with hydrocodone), Combunox (combined with oxycodone)
Indomethacin	Indocin, Indocin SR, Indo-Lemmon, Indomethagan
Ketoprofen	Oruvail
Ketorolac	Toradol
Mefenamic Acid	Ponstel
Meloxicam	Mobic
Nabumetone	Relafen
Naproxen	Naprosyn, Anaprox, Anaprox DS, EC-Naproxyn, Naprelan, Naprapac (copackaged with lansoprazole)
Oxaprozin	Daypro
Piroxicam	Feldene
Sulindac	Clinoril
Tolmetin	Tolectin, Tolectin DS, Tolectin 600

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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instruments and singing. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-545-7536. May 12-13 at 8.)

"IN THE COMPANY OF MEN"
The annual concert series of male dancers (who perform in it), by male dancers (who choreograph it), and for male dancers (who are offered role models) moves to Dance New Amsterdam's new theatre. This year's selections include a trio by the introspective tapper Marshall Davis, a dance-and-video solo based on the word "mother" by Julian Barnett, a duet created over the phone and via e-mail by Michael Whaites and Jon Kinzel, a youth-meets-age duet by Gus Solomons, Jr., and a quartet by Richard Rivera that demonstrates the phase changes of matter. (280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. May 12 at 8, May 13 at 2 and 8, and May 14 at 2.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
Kevin McKenzie—the artistic director of American Ballet Theatre—and the choreographer James Kudelka will discuss Kudelka's new stylish version of "Cinderella," which A.B.T. will be presenting for the first time during its spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House. Dancers from the company will perform excerpts from the ballet, which was made in 2004 for the National Ballet of Canada. Kudelka, usually known for darker fare, imagines the heroine as a lively tomboy and the prince as a young man transformed by his discovery of love. Both sessions are sold out, but there will be a standby list at the door. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. May 14-15 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
May 10 and May 13 at 7:30: Stephen Wadsworth's vivid production of Handel's **"Rodelinda"** makes a triumphant return to the Met. Renée Fleming has grown into the title role, turning in an understated performance of subtlety and depth; her lack of excess is matched by the honey-hued counter-tenor Andreas Scholl, making his début, who proves himself to be not only a consummate musician but a persuasive actor as well. Stephanie Blythe, Kobie van Rensburg, John Relyea, and Christophe Dumaux also turn in excellent performances; Patrick Summers leads a sympathetic accompaniment from the pit. ♦ May 11 at 8: It may seem strange that the words "Deborah Voigt" and **"Tosca"** should appear in the same sentence, but the American soprano, most admired for her performances of Wagner and Strauss, has added the title role of Puccini's opera to her repertory—and she sings most of it quite beautifully. But the lack of bite in her sound and the lack of menace in her acting prevent her from truly inhabiting the character. The reliable tenor Eduardo Villa sings the role of Cavaradossi, and Greer Grimsley takes a turn as Scarpia; Carlo Rizzi conducts. ♦ May 16 at 8: With Aprile Millo, a lesser star but a natural Tosca, replacing Voigt, and James Morris, a consummate professional, as Scarpia. (These are the final performances.) ♦ May 12 and May 15 at 6:30: Wagner would have liked the rotation of his operas at the Met this spring—Robert Wilson's radical production of "Lohengrin" bows out, and Otto Schenk's archconservative **"Parsifal"** comes in. And if the cast for the first was enviable, this one is unstoppable: Ben Heppner, Waltraud Meier, Nikolai Putilin, Thomas Hampson, and René Pape take the leading roles, under the guidance of the respected Wagner conductor Peter Schneider. ♦ May 13 at 1:30: John Copley's picture-postcard production of **"L'Elisir d'Amore,"** once a vehicle for the Nemorino of Luciano Pavarotti, is now a platform for the Adina of Ruth Ann Swenson. Giuseppe Filianoti, Peter Coleman-Wright, and Alessandro Corbelli complete the cast; Maurizio Barbacini. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA
Anthony Amato's East Village chamber-opera company ends its season with a Lilliputian production of **"Faust,"** sung with gusto by a mostly amateur cast. (319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. May 13 at 7:30 and May 14 at 2:30. Through June 11.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
John Adams's "Naïve and Sentimental Music," as strong a symphony as has been written in the past fifty years, is the common bond of two programs conducted by David Zinman and featuring the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who generously brings along three of the outstanding young musicians in his Silk Road Ensemble. May 10-11 at 7:30: Bartók's Rhapsody No. 1 for Cello and Orchestra and Beethoven's Triple Concerto precede the Adams, with Ma joined by the violinist Jonathan Gandelsman and the pianist Joel Fan. ♦ May 12-13 at 8: The same concert, but with the Beethoven replaced by Brahms's Double Concerto, in which Ma is paired with the violinist Colin Jacobsen. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE
Robert Bass conducts his singers (and the Orchestra of St. Luke's) in two celebratory religious works, Berlioz's Te Deum and Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 12 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC
Two concerts highlight the orchestra's range. May 12 at 8: Elvis Costello returns to the Philharmonic to sing several of his songs and to hear Alan Broadbent conduct a suite from his ballet, "Il Sogno." ♦ May 13 at 8: Chelsea Tipton II leads the group in a classical concert with an African-American theme, conducting Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony (with the mezzo-soprano Pamela Dillard) along with Daniel Bernard Roumain's "Hip-Hop Essay" and the world première of Thea Musgrave's "Remembering Harriet" (a tribute to Harriet Tubman, featuring the soprano Cynthia Haymon, the baritone Nmon Ford, and the Total Praise Choir of Emmanuel Baptist Church). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine's original program is replaced by a concert conducted by James Conlon, in which the majestic voices of Ben Heppner and René Pape (and that of a newcomer, the soprano Erika Sunnegårdh) will be heard in performances of operatic favorites by Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Puccini in between Mozart's "Linz" Symphony and Tchaikovsky's "Francesca da Rimini." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 14 at 3.)

RECITALS

MILTON BABBITT NINETIETH-BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Carnegie Hall pays its official tribute to the amiable master of integral serialism, a man whose puckish music has a way of revealing unexpected emotional depths. A crew that includes such experienced new-music hands as the soprano Judith Bettina and the violinist Rolf Schulte performs a slate of works that includes both the "Two Sonnets" (from 1955) and "A Waltzer in the House" (from 2003). (Weill Recital Hall. 212-247-7800. May 10 at 7:30.)

MITSUKO UCHIDA
One of the great Mozart players of our time offers one of her oblations for this anniversary year, a recital featuring three of the piano sonatas along with the Fantasia in C Minor, K. 475. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 11 at 8.)

"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES: ANNE LEBARON / JENNIFER HYMER
Two notable experimentalists offer the series' final concert of the season. An ensemble includ-

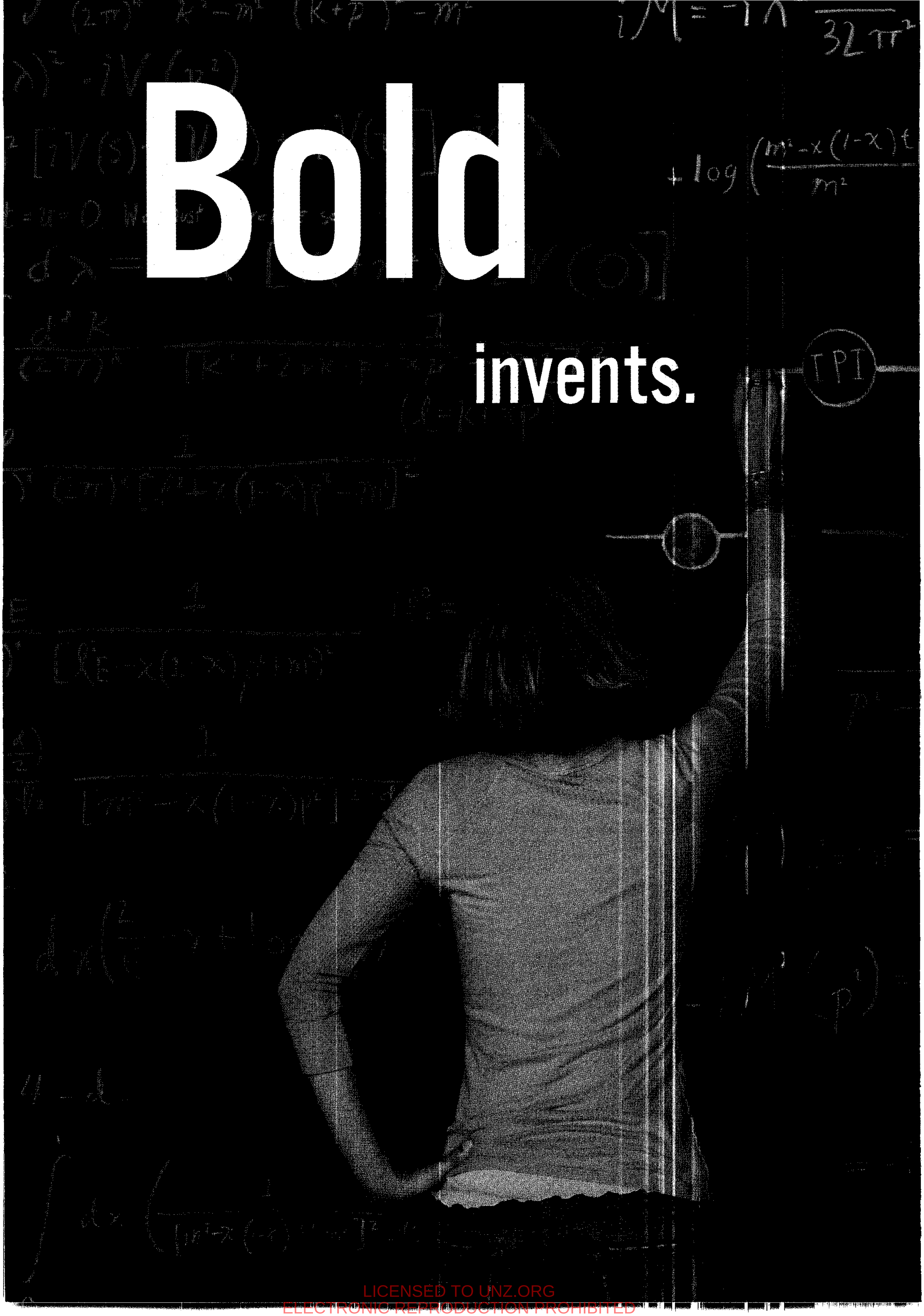
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
COP ON THE ROCKS

Robert Ryan gives a frighteningly ambiguous performance as a neurotic big-city policeman in Nicholas Ray's "On Dangerous Ground" (1952), screening May 12-13 in Film Forum's colossal "B Noir" series, which runs

through June 15. Ryan was tall and lanky, with a high forehead, thick dark hair, and a coldly objective way of speaking that bordered on intimidation. In the early stages of the movie, as he prowls the desolate streets and seedy bars at night, Ryan is relentless—a lonely man ravaged by the urban squalor he knows all too well. But the nastiness that he turns loose on scared punks and sultry sluts is mixed with intimations of haughty intelligence and obscure suffering. The movie then shifts to the mountains, where Ryan, investigating a crime, gets into a complicated emotional struggle with Ida Lupino, who plays a blind woman protecting a crazed younger brother. The elements of bathos and obviousness are there, but Ryan, working under Ray's emotionally sensitive direction, keeps the movie on edge right to the end.

—David Denby

ERIK T. JOHNSON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ing the soprano Lucy Shelton and the conductor Rand Steiger performs two recent LeBaron chamber works, while Hymer offers a selection of piano pieces by such composers as Annea Lockwood and Annie Gosfield. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 11 at 8.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET: SHOSTAKOVICH

The twentieth-century master's complete string quartets get a workout from the energetic and super-disciplined ensemble, in a multi-concert series that concludes this week. May 11 at 8: The Quartets Nos. 10-12. ♦ May 14 at 5: The death-haunted final Quartets, Nos. 13-15. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)

CAMILLA TILLING

The estimable pianist Julius Drake provides the backup for a concert by the up-and-coming Swedish soprano that features music by Schubert and Strauss along with a bouquet of Scandinavian songs by Stenhammar and Grieg. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 12 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC

The pianist Randall Hodgkinson's program, including works by Mozart, Webern, Schubert, and Schumann (the "Symphonic Études"), is the highlight of this week's concerts at the floating chamber-music series. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. May 12 at 7:30. For full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

"NEW VOICES FROM JAPAN"

John Zorn, the voraciously curious doyen of the downtown music scene, has an intimate knowledge of the composer-performers of the Japanese avant-garde; he has curated two separate programs for the Japan Society, in which he'll sit in with such musicians as Makigami Koichi, Haino Keiji, and Mike Patton. (333 W. 47th St. 212-715-1258. May 12-13 at 7:30.)

MUSICIANS FROM MARLBORO

One of the more predictable pleasures of the chamber-music scene is found at the Metropolitan Museum, where some of the legendary Vermont festival's talented young players (and their eminent teachers) play classics from the German repertory. This one features the cellist Peter Wiley and the baritone Charles Mays, among others, essaying such works as Schumann's "Dichterliebe" and Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht." (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. May 12 at 8.)

"NAUMBURG LOOKS BACK"

Two of the foundation's most distinguished award winners—the flutist Carol Wincenc and the clarinettist Charles Neidich—team up with the pianist Stephen Gosling to perform a selection of works by Schumann, Fauré, Lukas Foss, and others. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 12 at 8.)

VASSILY PRIMAKOV

The Russian piano powerhouse makes a modest entrance to New York, offering what should be a galvanic recital of works by Chopin, Schubert, and Beethoven (the "Appassionata" and Op. 111 sonatas) at a laid-back lounge and concert space. (Arium, 31 Little W. 12th St. 212-463-8630. May 13 at 8.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL": ETHEL

The price-is-right concert series begins its fourth season with a walk on the wild side, courtesy of the stylish downtown string quartet, which performs works by such composers as Don Byron, John King, and Phil Kline. (123 W. 43rd St. May 14 at 5. Free tickets, limited to two per customer, will be available at the door beginning at noon.)

MOVIES OPENING

DEAD MAN'S SHOES

Paddy Considine stars in this thriller, about an ex-soldier who seeks revenge on his disabled brother's tormentors. Directed by Shane Meadows. Opening May 12. (Cinema Village.)

GIULIANI TIME

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening May 12. (Sunshine Cinema.)

GOAL! THE DREAM BEGINS

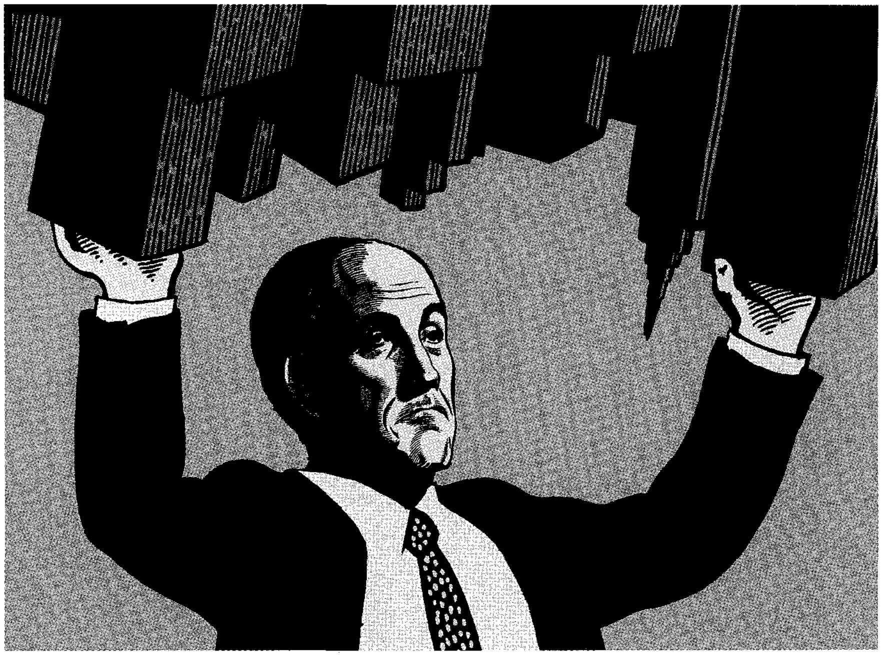
A drama about a young man (Kuno Becker) who tries to become a professional soccer player. Directed by Danny Cannon. Opening May 12. (In wide release.)

JUST MY LUCK

Lindsay Lohan stars as a rich New Yorker who swaps lives with an unlucky man. Directed by Donald Petrie. Opening May 12. (In wide release.)

KEEPING UP WITH THE STEINS

Scott Marshall directed this comedy, about a boy's Bar Mitzvah, starring Daryl Sabara and Jeremy Piven. Opening May 12. (In wide release.)



Kevin Keating's documentary "Giuliani Time" opens May 12 at Sunshine Cinema.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

MENDY: A QUESTION OF FAITH

A drama, directed by Adam Vardy, about a Hasidic Jew in Brooklyn who enters the secular world. Opening May 12. (Cinema Village.)

POSEIDON

A remake of "The Poseidon Adventure," directed by Wolfgang Petersen, starring Richard Dreyfuss, Josh Lucas, Kurt Russell, and Emmy Rossum. Opening May 12. (In wide release.)

RUSSIAN DOLLS

A young writer faces his troubles with love and money, in a comedy directed by Cédric Klapisch. In French. Opening May 10. (IFC Center.)

SKETCHES OF FRANK GEHRY

Sydney Pollack directed this biographical documentary about the architect. Opening May 12. (In wide release.)

WAH-WAH

Richard E. Grant directed this autobiographical drama, about an English boy growing up in Swaziland in the nineteen-sixties. Opening May 12. (Lincoln Square and 19th Street East 6.)

NOW PLAYING

ARMY OF SHADOWS

The tightest thriller in town. Jean-Pierre Melville is widely worshipped for his gangster sagas, such as "Le Samouraï" and "Le Cercle Rouge," but this tale of the French Resistance, though no less stylish (hats and dark suits still abound), has an added pulse of the heartfelt. It stars Lino Ventura as a stalwart of the underground movement, who slips the shackles of the occupying Germans and rejoins his small band of fellow-heroes. Not that their heroism is remotely flamboyant; what concerns Melville is the courage of the stoical, the phlegmatic, and the formidably organized. His direction honors that efficiency with a series of set pieces (one in a barber shop, another at Gestapo headquarters, a third in the face of a firing squad) in which the suspense grows almost intolerable. The movie, though made in 1969, has never been released here before. To miss it now would be a gross dereliction of duty. With an unflappable Simone Signoret. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/8/06.) (Film Forum.)

ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

The director Terry Zwigoff's second collaboration with the graphic novelist Daniel Clowes (the first was the brilliant "Ghost World") follows a hapless art-school student, Jerome (Max Minghella), who refuses to give up his dream of being the greatest artist in the world. Zwigoff ensconces his youthful idealist in relentless satirical commentary on the stereotypes and (often hilarious) pomposities of art school. However, the simplistic dual plots—one involving Jerome's obsession with the prettiest girl on campus (Sophia Myles), the other having to do with a strangler on the loose—feel artificially applied, and make for a disjointed second half. Not even John Malkovich, as a drawing teacher who has discovered triangles after twenty-five years of struggle, can save this ultimately dull enterprise.—*Shauna Lyon* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

GIULIANI TIME

By September 10, 2001, Rudolph Giuliani seemed to have worn out his welcome as Mayor of New York, but the sorrier aspects of his two terms of office were all but wiped from collective memory by his aplomb amidst the chaos of 9/11. Kevin Keating's documentary is a bracing reminder of Giuliani's rule and a debunking of his reputation. Though sustained by the recurring onscreen presence of the journalist Wayne Barrett, its first hour of scattershot criticisms from such motivated rivals as David Dinkins and Ron Kuby plays like attack-ad overkill. But then the facts kick in. The increased police brutality, exacerbated racial tensions, disregard for civil liberties, callous indifference to suffering, the martyrdom of Amadou Diallo and Abner Louima—all are recalled in a seething assemblage of interviews and news clips that induce painful flashbacks. Unfortunately, Keating's technique is not up to his ambitions: as in campaign advertising, even the truth is often obscured by the hard-sell package.—*Richard Brody* (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE GOLEM

In this German silent film from 1920, Rabbi Löw, the mystic leader of a Jewish ghetto in the sixteenth century, receives word that the emperor has ordered the destruction of the ghetto and dispersal of the

Jews. He invents a savior: the Golem, a massive figure of clay that the secret holy word, inscribed in an amulet on the figure's chest, brings to life. Showing off his creation to the emperor's court, the rabbi is called upon to display his magic: he conjures, on a blank wall, vast historical scenes of his people's sufferings—in short, movies. With overwhelming, hallucinatory set design and extravagant acting, the directors Paul Wegener and Carl Boese make this lurid and ludicrous fable resonate with mythical force. The story's byways—a Gentile knight's affair with the rabbi's daughter, the Golem's fearsome encounter with children playing outside the ghetto walls, a Samson-like encounter with a collapsing castle—are living cartoons that point backward to age-old legends and ahead, prophetically, to impending doom.—*R.B.* (Thalia Theatre; May 12.)

LADY VENGEANCE

The third installment of the Korean director Park Chanwook's revenge trilogy (following "Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance" and "Oldboy") may not be as graphically violent as its predecessors, but there are still buckets of blood and a curious lack of any emotional involvement besides disgust. The film's fragmented story line tells the tale of a woman who, to protect her daughter from a killer, deliberately spends years in prison for a murder she didn't commit. When she's released, she calls in favors from her former fellow-inmates to track down the real murderer. As a director, Park has a pulpy enough imagination, and his striking compositions and woozy camerawork are always visually commanding, but the film's enervated, single-minded quest for revenge leaves the viewer with nothing more to reflect on than cold moral ambiguity. In Korean.—*Bruce Diones* (Sunshine Cinema.)

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III

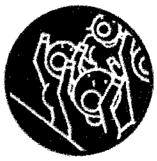
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

PRINCESS MARIE

In 1925, the middle-aged Princess Marie, née Bonaparte, of Greece and Denmark, entered a Paris hospital for elective surgery to correct her frigidity. When it failed, she went to Vienna to seek therapy from Dr. Sigmund Freud. Doctor and patient clicked; he provided care and insight; she provided money, prestige, power, and fanatical devotion. He became her confidant, and she became his fixer, his disciple, and, when the Nazis took over Austria, his savior. This exciting and revelatory work of historical fiction, a three-hour movie made in 2003 for French television, is born of another fortuitous working relationship, between its star, Catherine Deneuve, and its director, Benoît Jacquot. Deneuve throws herself into Marie's liberation as if it were her own, and Jacquot films Deneuve with an unflinching intensity that is itself akin to psychoanalysis. In the impossible role of Freud, Heinz Bennent conveys the burning intelligence behind chilly irony, and his own daughter Anne plays Anna Freud. The first scene, of the princess's pubic hair being shaved for surgery, starts the film at a high symbolic pitch, and it never descends to mere narration; the result is a gripping, speculative riot. In French and German.—*R.B.* (Jewish Museum; May 11.)

THE PROPOSITION

John Hillcoat's sweat-stained movie is set in the Australian outback at the tail end of the nineteenth century. Here, outside a remote settlement, live Captain Morris Stanley (Ray Winstone), the chief of police, and his wife, Martha (Emily Watson), who are striving to maintain a British decorum, complete with Christmas dinner, in an untamable land. Hence the determination with which Stanley pursues the Burns gang—three brothers (Richard Wilson, Guy Pearce, and Danny Huston), who have murdered a local family. The title refers to Stanley's risky offer: if the middle brother can find and kill the eldest and most savage, the youngest will be spared. What ensues is a strange blend of manhunt and tone poem, in which even the most brutal characters seem rapt in the face of red earth and endless sky. The film was written by Nick Cave, who, not surprisingly, supplied the music; the result may feel confused as a narrative, but, as a portrait of a riven culture, bred on racial conflict, it is formidably hard to ignore.—*A.L.* (5/8/06) (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)



POP NOTES
COMBAT ROCK

Weeks after National Guardsmen gunned down four Kent State students, in May, 1970, the pop singer Neil Young recorded "Ohio," blasting the Guard for the shootings. **"Living with War"** (Reprise), Young's new album, was created with the same urgency—it came together in just six days—though it responds to events that have been unfolding over the past five years. A protest record that condemns the Bush Administration for undertaking and then mismanaging the war in Iraq, "Living with War" sprang from Young's frustration with other artists: he has said that he got tired of waiting for a younger singer to step forward.

Of course, protest music needs to be judged on more than just conviction. Everyone remembers "Ohio," not just because of Kent State but because it is peerless folk-rock. "Living with War" opens with "After the Garden," which has a lovely melody and strong guitar work, but nothing other than its lyrics (which speak of a "shadow man runnin' the government" and a "stinkin' war") to distinguish it from countless other Neil Young songs. The title song introduces the album's main sonic tactic, subsuming the lead vocal into a huge choir and bringing populist heft to the proceedings. Young's own distinctive voice resurfaces on the third song, "Restless Consumers." Over a toothy riff, Young rejects corporate villainy in all its forms, whether Big Pharma or Big War. After each verse, he breaks away from the group and begins to bellow, "Don't need no more lies." It's bracing and a little bit startling, as sophisticated, funny, and furious a piece of pop music as we're likely to hear this year.

The rest of the record gradually comes down from that high, and if the lyrics are ripped from the headlines, the melodies are sometimes ripped from Young's back catalogue. The punchy "Shock and Awe" picks up the tune of "Hey, Hey, My, My"; and "Flags of Freedom" references Bob Dylan's "Chimes of Freedom" and reuses Young's own "Pocahontas." The songs in the middle of the album are shorter, simpler, and more direct. "Have you seen the flags of freedom?" Young asks. "What color are they now? Do you think that you believe in yours more than they do theirs somehow?" Most pointed is "Let's Impeach the President," whose argument is no different from what you'd hear in Democratic (and, increasingly, Republican) households, with snippets of speeches helpfully supplied to illustrate Bush's hypocrisy. Young may be preaching to the choir, but he also lets them preach back; the record closes with a churchy a-cappella version of "America the Beautiful" that reaffirms the link between patriotism and protest. On this track, Young is nowhere to be heard, and all the louder for it.

—*Ben Greenman*

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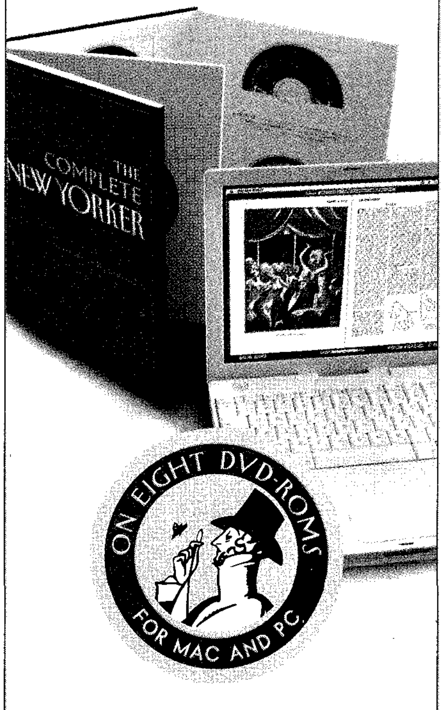

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Available at thenewyorkerstore.com and wherever books are sold.

UNITED 93

Paul Greengrass's account of how a single group of passengers, almost certain of death, decided on the morning of September 11, 2001, to fight back against hijackers on a suicide mission turns out to be—after much public anxiety about potential "exploitation"—an example of a hundred per cent professional filmmaking. Greengrass's movie is tightly wrapped, unrelenting, and, no matter how exciting, superbly precise. For this story of semi-anonymous group heroism, he uses actual professionals (pilots, flight attendants, an air-traffic controller) mixed in with largely unknown actors, and avoids visual or verbal rhetoric. The handheld camera is an active participant in everything that's going on—and still manages to see what it needs to see out of the corner of its eye. The avoidance of front-and-center staging makes us feel the uncertainty of an unprecedented situation. This is true existential filmmaking; in the end, the viewer's dread is released in mad exhilaration as the passengers charge the hijackers with the force of engorged water breaking through a dam.—*David Denby* (5/1/06) (In wide release.)

THE WINDOW

"The Window" transplants the story of the boy who cried wolf to a New York City tenement in the heat of the night. Bobby Driscoll plays a naughty, fanciful lad who's just trying to sleep peacefully on the fire escape when he sees his upstairs neighbors (Paul Stewart and Ruth Roman) commit cold-blooded murder. Naturally, his parents (Arthur Kennedy and Barbara Hale) don't believe him. The lowdown high concept and the eye of the director (Ted Tetzlaff, who as a cinematographer shot Hitchcock's "Notorious") earn this tight 1949 suspense film its sordid whiff of immortality; it brings out paranoid feelings in even the most sedate children. Mel Dinelli adapted a Cornell Woolrich story.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; May 14.)

Also Playing

AKEELAH AND THE BEE: In wide release. **BELLE DE JOUR:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **R.V.:** In wide release. **SILENT HILL:** In wide release. **STICK IT:** In wide release. **WATER:** In wide release. **THE WILD:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Special screenings. May 10 at 8: "In the Land of Milk and Money" (2004, Susan Emshwiller). ♦ May 11 at 8: "Audio Vérité," sound recordings of Martin Scorsese and others. ♦ Works from the Film-Makers' Cooperative. May 12 at 8: Program one. ♦ May 13 at 8: Program two. ♦ May 14 at 8: Program three. ♦ The Bicycle Film Festival. Selected screenings. May 13 at 7: "Pedal" (2001, Peter Sutherland). ♦ May 14 at 2: "Caravan/Prague" (2005, Zack Winestine) and short films. ♦ "Essential Cinema." May 13 at 6: "Nanook of the North" (1922, Robert Flaherty). ♦ May 14 at 6: "Man of Aran" (1934, Flaherty).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

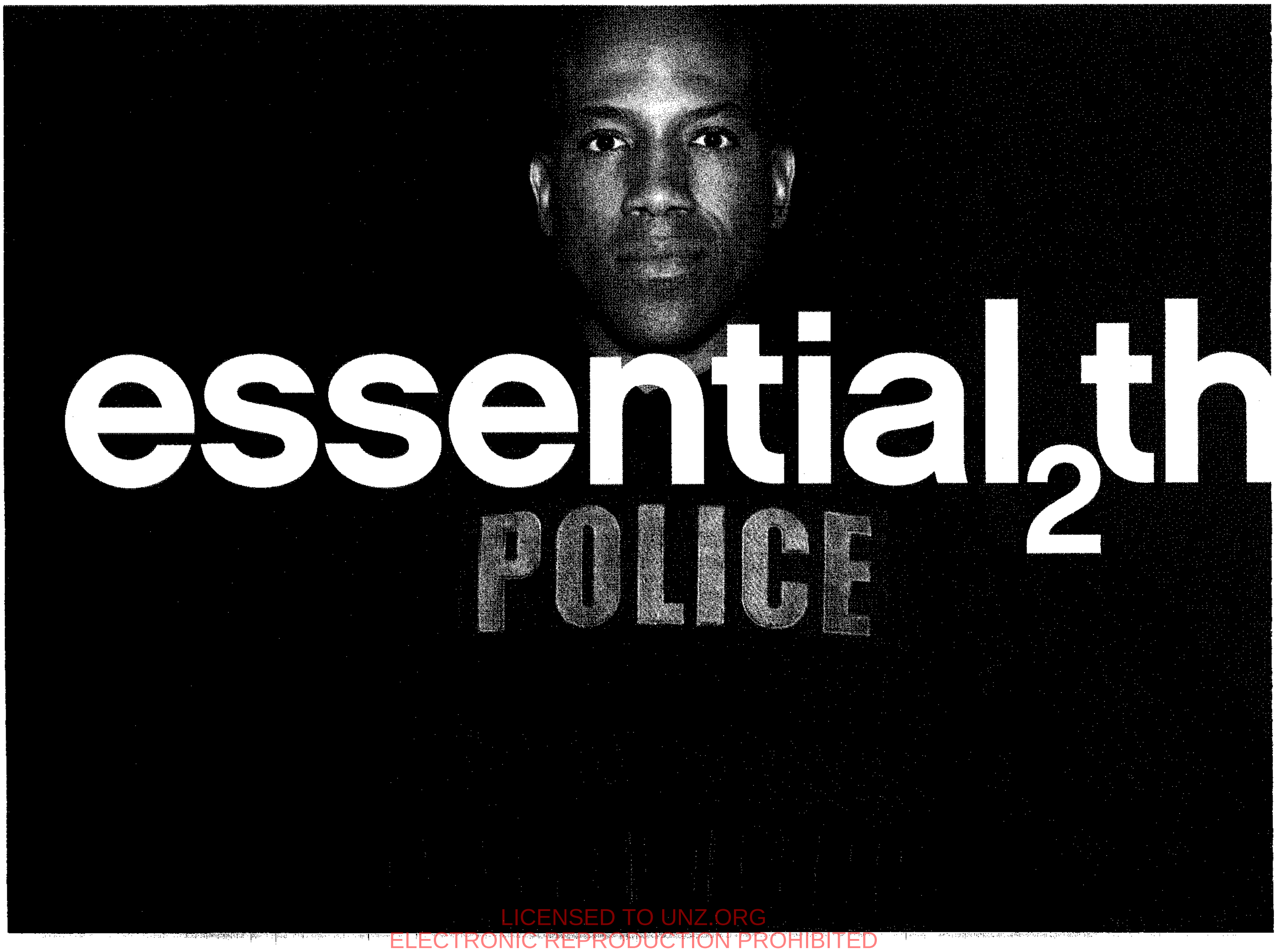
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Mikio Naruse. May 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Scattered Clouds" (1967; in Japanese). ♦ Through May 21: "Sundance Institute at BAM." May 12 at 4, May 13 at 12:30, and May 15 at 6:40: "The Short Life of José Antonio Gutierrez" (2006, Heidi Specogna). ♦ May 12 at 9:30: "Stephanie Daley" (2006, Hilary Brougher). ♦ May 13 at 5:45: "Iraq in Fragments" (2006, James Longley). ♦ May 13 at 8:30: "TV Junkie" (2006, Michael Cain and Matt Radecki). ♦ May 13 at 11:30: "Destricted" (2006, short erotic films by Matthew Barney, Larry Clark, and others). ♦ May 14 at 3:30 and May 16 at 6:40: "American Blackout" (2006, Ian Inaba). ♦ May 14 at 6:15 and May 15 at 9:30: "Son of Man" (2006, Mark Dornford-May). ♦ May 14 at 9:15 and May 15 at 9:30: "Forgiven" (2006, Paul Fitzgerald).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. May 10-16 at 1, 3:45, 6:45, and 9:30: "Army of Shadows" (†). ♦ Through June 15: "B Noir." May 10 at 1:05, 4:30, and 8: "He Ran All the Way" (1951, John Berry). ♦ May 10 at 2:40, 6:10, and 9:40: "Tension" (1949, Berry). ♦ May 11 at 1:05 and 6:10: "Born to Kill" (1947, Robert Wise). ♦ May 11 at 3 and 8:05: "Bodyguard" (1948, Richard Fleischer). ♦ May 11 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Shakedown" (1950, Joseph Pevney). ♦ May 12-13 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "On Dangerous Ground" (1952, Nicholas Ray). ♦ May 12-13 at 2:45, 6:25, and 10:05: "They Live by Night" (1949, Ray). ♦ May 14 at 1:05, 4:15, 7:25, and 10:30: "The Window" (†). ♦ May 14 at 2:30, 5:45, and 8:50: "The Web" (1947, Michael Gordon). ♦ May 15 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "The Dark Past" (1948, Rudolph Maté). ♦ May 15 at 2:35, 5:35, and 8:35: "My Name Is Julia Ross" (1945, Joseph H. Lewis). ♦ May 16 at 2:40, 6, and 9:20: "Black Tuesday" (1954, Hugo Fregonese). ♦ May 16 at 4:20 and 7:40: "The Glass Web" (1953, Jack Arnold).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through May 30: The films of André Téchiné. May 16 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Le Lieu du Crime" (1986; in French).



IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The Films of Akira Kurosawa. May 12-14 at noon: "Ran" (1985; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." May 13-14: "Black Mama, White Mama" (1972, Eddie Romero).

THE JEWISH MUSEUM
1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St. (212-423-3337)—"Freud on Film." May 11 at 6:30: "Princess Marie" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Rediscovering Roscoe: The Careers of 'Fatty' Arbuckle." For more information, go to www.moma.org. May 10 at 6: "Late Shorts and Features," part one, program seven (1919-20). ♦ May 11 at 6: "Late Shorts and Features," part two, program eight (1919-20). ♦ May 13 at 8:30: "Directing After the Scandal," part one, program nine (1922-25). ♦ May 14 at 2:30: "Directing After the Scandal," part two, program ten (1925-26). ♦ May 14 at 5: "Directing After the Scandal," part three, program eleven (1926-27). ♦ May 15 at 6: "Career Recap," program twelve (1915-1933). ♦ The films of Lech Majewski. May 10 at 6:15, May 12 at 6, and May 14 at 2: "Wojacek" (1999; in Polish). ♦ May 10 at 8: "Basquiat" (1996, Julian Schnabel). ♦ May 11 at 6: "The Roe's Room" (1997; in Polish). ♦ May 11 at 8: "Blood of a Poet" (2006). ♦ May 13 at 5: "Gospel According to Harry" (1992). ♦ May 13 at 7: "Angelus" (2000; in Polish). ♦ Special screenings. May 10 at 8: "Elio Petri: Notes on a Filmmaker" (2005, Federico Bacci, Stefano Leone, and Nicola Guarneri). ♦ May 13 at 6:30: Short films by Diane Bonder (1996-2006), introduced by the director. ♦ May 15 at 8: "Lost in Wu Song" (2005, Lu Yitong; in Mandarin). ♦ "In Memoriam: Nam June Paik." May 11 at 8: Program three, including "Allan 'n' Allen's Complaint" (1982). ♦ May 13 at 4:30: Program four, including " 'Topless Cellist' Charlotte Moorman" (1995). ♦ "Barney Rosset Presents." May 12 at 8:30 and May 13 at 2: "Film" (1965, Alan Schneider) and outtakes, "Un Chant d'Amour" (1950, Jean Genet; *silent*), and "The Hard-Boiled Egg" (2006, James Fotopoulos). The May 12 screening is introduced by Rosset and Fotopoulos.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through June 8: "American Maverick: A Robert Altman Retrospective." ♦ May 13 at noon: "Tanner '88" (episodes five and six) (1988). ♦ May 13 at 1:30 and May 14 at 4: "Nashville" (1975). ♦ May 13 at 4:30: "Buffalo Bill and the Indians" (1976). ♦ May 13-14 at 7: "Images" (1972). ♦ May 14 at noon: "Tanner '88" (episodes seven and eight) (1988). ♦ May 14 at 1:30: "Popeye" (1980).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Special screenings. May 10 at 7: "Cycles of Porn" (2006, Jochen Hick). ♦ May 11 at 7:15: "New York Doll" (2005, Greg Whiteley). ♦ May 13 at 6:30: "The Ramones: End of the Century" (2003, Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia). ♦ May 13 at 11: "Deep Throat" (1972, Gerard Damiano). ♦ May 14 at 7: "Side Effects" (2005, Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau). ♦ "Brave New Europe." May 10 at 9: "How I Killed a Saint" (2004, Teona Strugar Mitevska; in Macedonian). ♦ May 11-16 at 9: "Light from the East" (2005, Amy Grappell). ♦ May 16 at 5:45: "Bitter" (2003, Darya Zhuk; in Russian) and "Samantha Smith Project" (2005, Irene Lusztig).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." May 12-13: "Touch of Evil," director's cut (1958, Orson Welles).

SWISS INSTITUTE
495 Broadway, at Broome St., 3rd fl. (212-925-2035)—"Universal Character." May 16 at 7: A short-film program curated by Jenny Perlin, including "Phat Free" (1995-99, David Hammons), "Hand Movie" (1966, Yvonne Rainer), "How to Fix the World" (2004, Jacqueline Goss), "Secondary Currents" (1982, Peter Rose), and "Every Revolution Is a Roll of the Dice" (1978, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet; in French).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Special screenings. May 12 at 8:30: "The Golem" (†). ♦ May 14 at 2: "Sophie Scholl: The Final Days" (2005, Marc Rothemund; in German). ♦ May 14 at 4:30 and May 16 at 6 : "Kansas City" (1996, Robert Altman).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through May 18: "The Road to Damascus: Discovering Syrian Cinema." All films are in Arabic. May 10 at 2:30 and May 12 at 2: "Dreams of the City" (1983, Mohammed Malas). ♦ May 11 at 3: "Film-Essay on the Euphrates Dam" (1970, Omar Amiralay) and short films. ♦ May 11 at 9: "The Half-Meter Incident" (1981, Samir Zikra). ♦ May 12 at 4:15: "The Dream" (1981, Malas). ♦ May 12 at 6: "The Dupes" (1972, Tewfik Saleh). ♦ May 13 at 1:30 and May 16 at 2: "A Land for a Stranger" (1998, Zikra). ♦ May 13 at 4:30: A program of short films (1977-2005). ♦ May 13 at 6:30: "Passion" (2004, Malas). ♦ May 13 at 8:40 and May 15 at 5: "The Night" (1993, Malas). ♦ May 15 at 1 and 7:15: "Al-Lajat" (1996, Riyad Shayya). ♦ May 15 at 2:45 and 9: "The Greedy Ones" (1991, Rémond Boutros). ♦ Preview screening. May 12 at 8:30: "A Prairie Home Companion" (2006, Robert Altman), introduced by Garrison Keillor.

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READINGS AND TALKS

"SELECTED SHORTS"
Jane Fonda hosts an evening featuring writings by and about women. Fonda will read from her autobiography, "My Life So Far," and the actors Lois Smith, Brenda Wehle, and Myra Lucretia Taylor will read stories by Yiyun Li and Monica Wood and poems by Maya Angelou, respectively. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 10 at 6:30.)

"FREUD'S FORESKIN"
The original psychoanalyst was born on May 6, 1856, making this month the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of his birth—and his bris. The Dorot Jewish Division of the New York Public Library marks the occasion with four short lectures. The participants are Robin Judd, the author of the forthcoming book "Cutting Identities: Jewish Rituals and German Politics"; Eric Kline Silverman, whose volume "From Abraham to America: The History of Jewish Circumcision" is due out next month; Jay Geller, a senior lecturer at Vanderbilt University and the author of the forthcoming study "Mitigating Circumcisions: Judentum and the Construction of Freud's Corpus"; and Eliza Slavet, of New York University's Gallatin School. (Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For reservations, call 212-930-0601. May 10 at 7.)

SHERE HITE
The veteran sexual historian reads from the new anthology of her work, "The Shere Hite Reader." (Labyrinth Books, 536 W. 112th St. No tickets necessary. May 10 at 7.)

ROGER ANGELL
Angell, an editor at this magazine, reads from his memoir, "Let Me Finish." (The Corner Bookstore, Madison Ave. at 93rd St. 212-831-3554. May 11 at 6.)

"UNRAVELING THE USUAL SUSPECTS"
As a part of the Sundance Institute's residency at BAM, the screenwriter Chris McQuarrie discusses his 1995 film, "The Usual Suspects." (BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave, Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. May 12 at 6:50.)

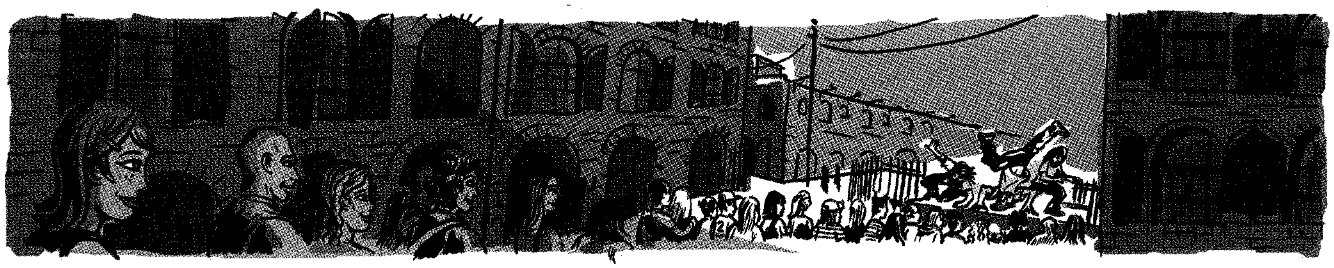
JOSEPH MITCHELL SYMPOSIUM
The G. K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture presents a celebration of the work and life of the late author, with the history professor Kenneth T. Jackson and the *New Yorker* writers Nancy Franklin, Calvin Trillin, and Mark Singer, among others. (Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J. 973-275-2525. May 13 from 10 to 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"INSIDE/OUT"
The performance artist Laura Barnett and the visual artist Sandra Spannan are gathering confessions and painting portraits in a storefront in Times Square. People have the chance to share their deepest secrets, written anonymously on slips of paper. Barnett posts them in the window, and passersby—perhaps entranced by the workings of the contemporary-art world (Barnett and Spannan have done this in Berlin, and they're heading to Italy in the fall), maybe simply captivated by details about troublesome flatulence, secretly despised stepmothers, and unhealthy eating habits—stop and stare. Spannan quickly paints their portraits, which are also posted. (Chashama @ West 44th Street, 112 W. 44th St. Through May 11, from 4 to 8.)

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS HOUSE TOUR
The city's first Historic District lies just one subway stop from Manhattan, across the East River. It was designated in 1965 to protect Brooklyn Heights' nineteenth-century Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate residences. On May 13, from 1 to 5, five elegant homes will be open to the public for self-guided tours. (For more information, call 718-858-9193, or visit www.brooklynheightsassociation.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
The highlight of **Sotheby's** contemporary-art sales on May 10-11 is Roy Lichtenstein's "Sinking Sun," from 1964 (a longtime possession of Dennis Hopper), a large canvas rendered in primary colors divided into fields by bold horizontal lines. The sales also include works by such heavy hitters as Calder, De Kooning, Warhol, Damien Hirst, and Cecily Brown. A more specialized sale will take place on May 10-12: an enormous collection of stamps from British North America assembled by Sir Gawaine Baillie, a race-car driver and businessman who, unbeknownst to his family and friends, amassed one of the largest philatelic collections in the world. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's** holds its postwar and contemporary morning and afternoon sales on May 10, with works by Motherwell, Rothko, and Wayne Thiebaud, along with a playful "seascape" by Tom Wesselmann in which the foreground is dominated by a long, slim leg clad in a gray stocking. A sale of musical instruments on May 16 includes a Stradivarius violin known as "the Hammer," until recently on loan to the violinist Kyoko Takezawa. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ The comparatively lean and mean **Phillips** offers a two-day contemporary-art sale (May 11-12) of pieces by such luminaries as Jeff Koons, whose five-foot polychrome wood sculpture of Buster Keaton on a donkey captures the comic actor's deeply melancholy presence. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)



The Red Hook Waterfront Arts Festival, in Brooklyn.

PAUL HOPPE

ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
WHERE CREDIT IS DUE
May 21

Switzerland has produced more than cuckoo clocks—there have also been some superb Swiss composers, such as Schoeck, Martin, and Honegger, whose music Leon Botstein conducts for the American Symphony Orchestra. (212-868-9276.)

MOVIES
THALIA REDUX
May 25-28

Richard Schwarz, who died in 1990, ran the Thalia from 1977 to 1987, its glory days of cinephile grunge. Anthology Film Archives offers a weekend of treasures from Schwarz's own film collection, including Jean-Pierre Melville's hothouse collaboration with Jean Cocteau, "Les Enfants Terribles"; Jerzy Skolimowski's comedy "Le Départ"; and a rare film noir by Jacques Tourneur, "Circle of Danger," from 1951. (212-505-5181.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
THE DOCKS SING
June 3

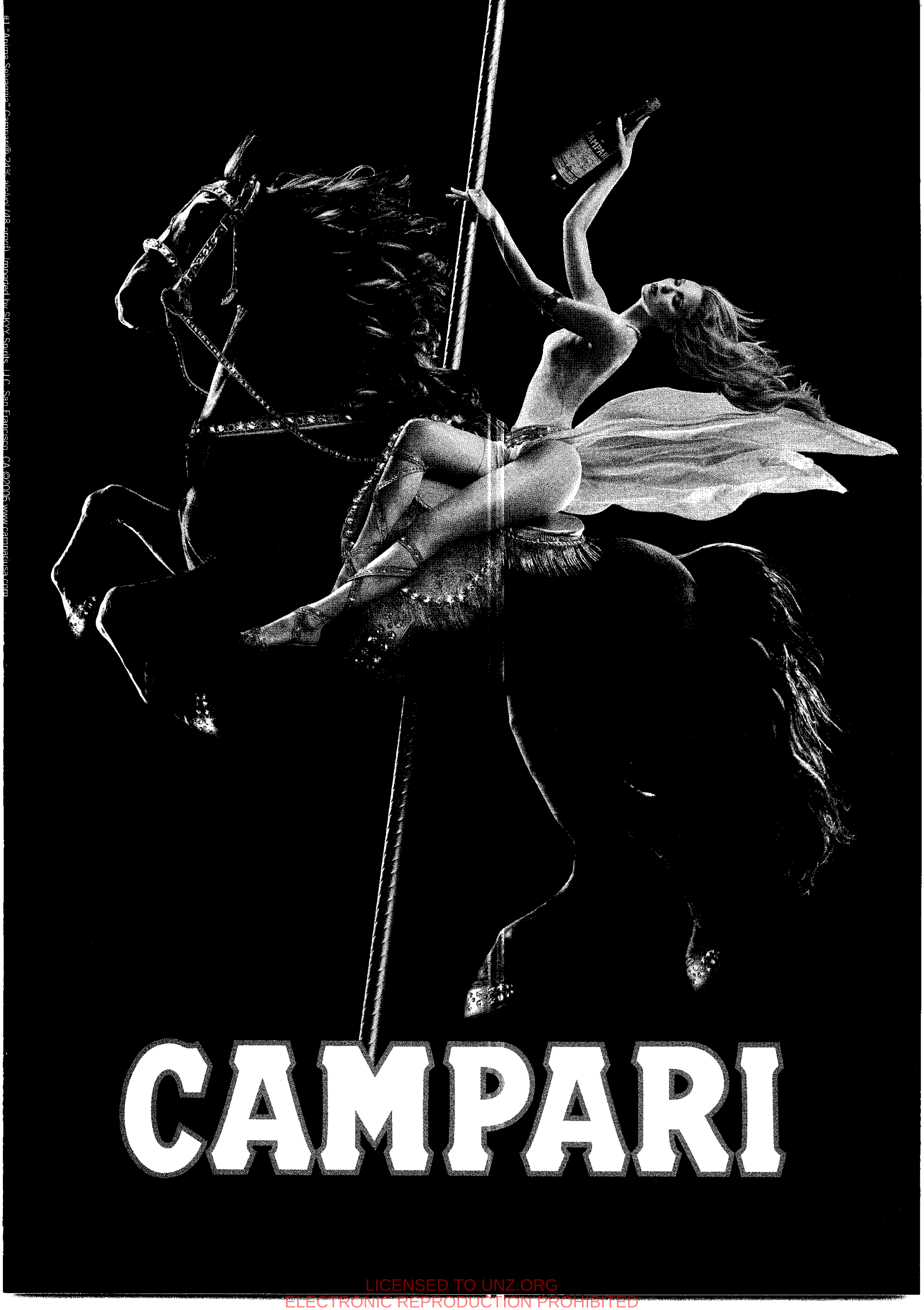
After industry moved out of Red Hook, Brooklyn, artists moved in. The Red Hook Waterfront Arts Festival, now in its twelfth year, features samba-dancing children, the Latin rock band Radio Mundial, the percussion outfit Mecca Bodega, the improvisational troupe Hip Hop Commedia, and the dance group Urban Bush Women. (718-287-2224.)

THE THEATRE
HOG WILD
June 9

Roundabout Theatre Company presents the world première of a new comedy from the Tony Award-winning team behind "Urinetown": John Rando directs Greg Kotis's "Pig Farm," a look at pig farmers and sustainable agriculture. (212-719-1300.)

ART
TOAST THE WHITNEY
June 29-Sept. 3

In honor of its seventy-fifth anniversary, the Whitney Museum is preparing to fill its galleries with highlights from its permanent collection of twentieth-century American art: Hoppers and Naumans, Sheelers and Gorkys, Warhols, Wojnarowiczs, and more. (800-944-8639.)



CAMPARI
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HOUSE OF CAMPARI

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May 5 - May 21
Gallery Hours: Tuesdays to Saturdays 12-8 PM and Sundays 12-6 PM
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HOUSE OF CAMPARI
Supports and highlights emerging artists throughout the month of May.

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HOUSE OF
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FEATURING WORK BY:
Tim Barber, Carter, Yi Chen, Matt Connors, Chris Dorland, Bendix Harms, Valerie Hegarty, Matthew Day Jackson, Anthony James, Jennie C. Jones, Justin Lieberman, Bradley McCallum & Jacqueline Tarry, Wardell Milan, Wangechi Mutu, David Noonan, Os Gemeos, Adam Pendleton, Mika Rottenberg, Shinique Smith, Saeko Takagi, Scott Treleaven, Aya Uekawa, Helen Verhoeven and Zachary Wollard.

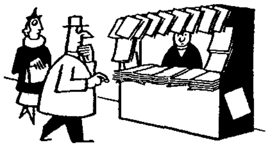
SPECIAL THANKS:
Thanks to the following galleries for their participation: Anton Kern, Artists Space, ATM Gallery, Deitch Projects, Foxy Production, Guild & Greyshkul, Holasek Weir Gallery, Jeff Bailey Gallery, John Connelly Presents, Kravets/Wehby Gallery, Salon 94, Spencer Brownstone Gallery, Marianne Boesky Gallery, Massimo Audiello, Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, Perry Rubenstein Gallery, Plus Ultra Gallery, The Proposition, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., Taxter & Spengemann Gallery, Wallspace? Gallery, White Columns, The Whitney Museum at Altria, Yvon Lambert New York and Zach Feuer Gallery.

Exhibition Curated by Simon Watson and Craig Hensala of Scenic

THE NEW YORKER

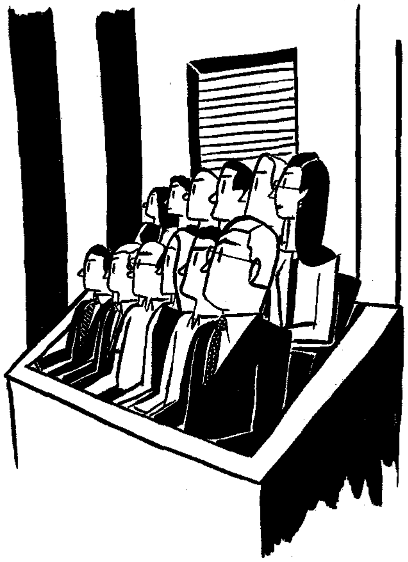
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
SENTENCED



Against the background of the chronic miasma of fear, tension, suffering, and sporadic but horrifying violence that envelops the world on account of Islamist fundamentalist terrorism and the reaction to it, the fate of Zacarias Moussaoui, the self-proclaimed, wanted-to-be, wasn't-there twentieth hijacker of September 11, 2001, is of relatively small moment. Nevertheless, a debt of gratitude is owed to the nine men and three women of the jury in Alexandria, Virginia, that, last Wednesday, declined to direct that Moussaoui be put to death. The calm seriousness with which these anonymous citizens approached their task has reassured many of us that our federal criminal-court system, even in the face of the extraordinary pressures generated by the exigencies (and the politics) of the "war on terror," remains capable of rendering justice in which sternness is guided by wisdom. And the jurors' civic courage has probably made all of us a little—only a little, but still—safer.

Moussaoui's case was a murky one. Of his criminal intentions there was never any doubt. He had toured the familiar stops on the Al Qaeda road: alienation and anomie in Europe, in his case France; fundamentalist indoctrination at the Finsbury Park mosque, in London; instruction at a terrorist camp in Afghanistan; flight training in Oklahoma and Minnesota; wire transfers of cash from abroad. But he was unstable and unreliable, and his connections to the specifics of the 9/11 plot were tenuous or nonexistent. On the day of the attacks, he was in jail awaiting deportation, having been arrested nearly a month earlier after a suspicious flight instructor tipped off the Minneapolis office of the F.B.I. His story kept changing in the course of nearly four and a half years of court proceedings, and he tried more than once to plead guilty to the conspiracy charges against him. Finally, in April of 2005, the presiding judge, Leonie Brinkema (who by all accounts conducted the case in an exemplary manner), accepted his pleas. What kept the trial going for another year was the government's fixation on pursuing the death penalty.



One need feel no sympathy for Moussaoui to suspect that this fixation had more to do with domestic politics and conservative ideology than with justice per se. The familiar arguments against the death penalty apply to cases like his, some with special force. Whether or not the prospect of lethal injection deters ordinary murder—a questionable proposition at best—it is perverse to imagine that it can deter the sort of murder of which faith-based ritual suicide is an integral part. And any execution, whatever the crime it is intended to punish, degrades the society that decrees it and demoralizes the particular government employees who are assigned to carry it out. A criminal may deserve to die, may deserve even to die in terror and agony; but no civil servant deserves to be made to participate in the premeditated killing of a person who, however wicked, is on the day of execution a helpless and frightened human being.

The trial and punishment of any international terrorist occurs in a global political context that darkens another of the stains on capital punishment: the company it keeps. In 2005, according to Amnesty International, ninety-four per cent of all known executions took place in four countries. One, China, is a Communist Party dictatorship. Two others, Iran and Saudi Arabia, are Islamist autocracies. The fourth

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

is the United States. In the democracies of Europe, American capital punishment is a source of puzzlement and disgust. But, even among Europeans who understand that its prevalence here is a function less of bloodthirstiness than of states' rights, the execution of a European national (Moussaoui is a French citizen of Moroccan descent) in a federal death chamber for a crime in which he had no direct role would have wreaked new and unnecessary damage on popular and perhaps governmental support for America's antiterrorist efforts. Moral equivalences, however false, would have been drawn, and European coöperation, which is indispensable, would have been ever so slightly undermined. The Alexandria jurors, whatever their intention, chose not to inflict that wound on their country.

After the sentence was pronounced, MSNBC trotted out a bullet-headed talk-radio host to sneer at "the sissification of America." But if it was mercy he was deploring his indignation was misplaced. "Life imprisonment without possibility of parole" hardly begins to describe the bleakness that awaits Moussaoui. He will be taken to the federal Supermax prison, in Florence, Colorado. He will be locked in a featureless, soundproof concrete box, seven feet by twelve. There he will remain—in solitary confinement, with scarcely a glimpse of sky and none of greenery, and no contact with other living things besides guards and insects—until he dies. The cruelty of this is terrible indeed, and any satisfaction it brings must be mixed with pity and even with shame.

The Moussaoui case could have been settled long ago, with the same result and the same horrific sentence, had it not been for the government's single-minded pursuit of death. That pursuit is an apt metaphor for the wrongheadedness of what the Administration still calls, despite occasional spasms of discomfort with the term, the war on terror. The campaign against Al Qaeda in particular and Islamist terrorism in general plainly has aspects of war-fighting, but it has equally important aspects of crime-fighting and arguably more important aspects of political and ideological struggle. For the Administration, the trope of war has proved useful both for mobilizing the government and for intimidating domestic opposition, winning elections, and aggrandizing executive power. But it has also abetted the rush to the strategic disaster of Iraq and the moral disasters of Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and torture. Finally, it has conferred on criminal terrorists a status they desperately want but do not deserve. Bin Laden wished for war—war between Islam and the infidels—and war is what we gave him; Moussaoui wished for martyrdom, and our government would have granted that wish, too, if not for the jury in Virginia.

"The thought that U.S. jurors are capable of such muddled thinking is horrifying," the usually more sensible *Daily News* editorialized the day of the sentencing. "*Any* role in 9/11, *any* foreknowledge of the attacks, *any* aid and comfort given Al Qaeda is grounds for death. As too many forget, and as some on this jury obviously forgot, this is war." Is it? Moussaoui certainly thinks so. From the following morning's report in the *Times:*

> When Robert A. Spencer, the chief prosecutor, objected that it was inappropriate for Mr. Moussaoui to make a political speech, Judge Brinkema agreed.
>
> Mr. Moussaoui continued, nonetheless, saying, "You have branded me a terrorist or criminal." In fact, he said, he was a soldier in the Islamic cause.

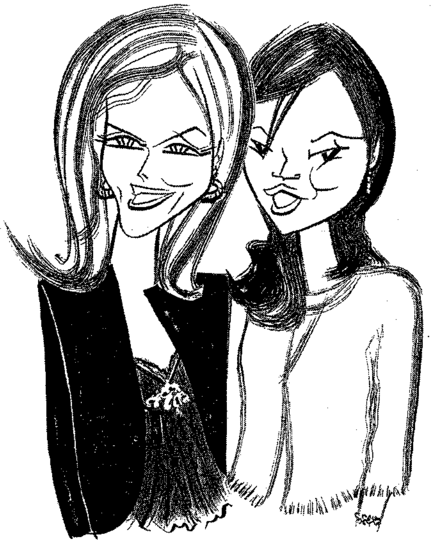
In the courtroom, there was no war and there was no soldier. There was a criminal and a terrorist, and there was law and justice.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

TRUE LOVE DEPT.
THE ONE AND ONLY

The title of Kathy Freston's new book, "The One: Finding Soul Mate Love and Making It Last," speaks to the widely held aspiration that romantic love might be governed by simple formulas; but, as Freston elaborated at a book party held in her honor at the Core Club last week, relationship math is rarely that simple. "There are six billion people in the world, and I can't imagine there's only one person for each person—if something was to happen to him, we're in trouble," said Freston, who used to be a model and is now what the dust jacket of her book calls a personal-growth and spirituality counsellor.

Everyone can have more than one One, explained Freston, who is married to Tom Freston, the C.E.O. of Viacom; and while she said fondly that she had had only one One, the evidence of her One's prior One was circulating the room in the shape of Gil Freston, Tom Freston's teen-age son from his previous marriage. Barely a guest was present who did not have at least one earlier One in his or her past: Calvin Klein was there, long parted from his onetime One, Kelly Klein. Jann Wenner made an appearance, and so did his former One, Jane Wenner, though Matt Nye, his No. 1 One for the past several years, was nowhere to be seen.



Kathy Freston and Wendi Murdoch

One of the party's hosts, the singer and songwriter Carole Daly—who used to be known as Carole Bayer Sager before she married Burt Bacharach and, later on, Robert Daly, the former head of Warner Brothers—had had more Ones than can fit on a driver's license. "Neil Simon once said about me that Bayer Sager Bacharach Daly could have been a great law firm," she said.

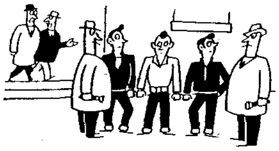
Freston's book, which draws upon Buddhism, Hinduism, and the works of Marianne Williamson, calls upon readers to "move towards wholeness by regarding your partner as an extension of God"—a regard unlikely to seem inappropriate to many on the guest list. The book is peppered with case studies, such as one in which a husband humiliates his wife by telling guests that part of the Thanksgiving dinner she is serving was ordered in. (According to Freston, the way for him to make up for it would be to say, "I know how hard you worked and instead of feeling grateful, I dishonored you in front of people. . . . To help make sure it doesn't happen again, I have signed up for a course in how to work through childhood wounds.") Meditation is a highly recommended tool, and one that Freston's friends say they value, without necessarily finding time for it themselves. "They say that once you can truly meditate, you can meditate anywhere, like on a bus," said Carole Daly, who admitted that she has not actually been on a bus in twenty-five years.

"Kathy is a very spiritual person," said Wendi Murdoch, who, with her husband, Rupert Murdoch, was a co-host of the party, and who met Freston at Herb Allen's Sun Valley retreat a couple of years ago after their mutual yoga instructor told the pair they would hit it off. "I am not a very spiritual person, but I would like to be," she said. "I read the book and kept thinking, That's me! That's me!" Her recognition presumably did not occur on page 102, where Freston recommends transforming anger ("You make me nuts when you leave your clothes all over the place") into a workable solution ("Let's hire someone to come in and clean once a week").

In fact, Murdoch explained, she and her husband are living in domestic chaos of another sort, having sold their SoHo loft (for twenty-five million dollars) before the renovation of their new apartment (the Fifth Avenue penthouse of the late Laurance S. Rockefeller, purchased for forty-four million dollars) was completed. "We're homeless!" she exclaimed. "We stay in hotels. Whichever one gives us the cheapest rate." Her deficiencies of spirituality notwithstanding, Wendi Murdoch's spiritedness seemed unbounded; and, at the least, her husband explained, she had persuaded him to take up yoga, which he is now practicing two or three times a week. "She's my great help and adviser," he said, at which she said, "Aww!" and gently beat upon his shoulder with an affectionate, paw-like gesture—proving that, while, as the third Mrs. Murdoch, she may be his One More, he is her Won Over.

—Rebecca Mead

DEPT. OF CREDULITY
THE OOPS CON



Luc Sante, the author of "Low Life," a book about small-time criminal activity in old New York, left the city six years ago for the Hudson Valley, but the other day he found occasion, from his rustic perch, to comment on the rebirth of the art of the urban swindle. "From all indications, street crime is back in a big way," Sante said.

Among those signs is the recent appearance, in the neighborhood around Columbia University, of a classic tourist con—a sidewalk collision, followed by a dropped (and inevitably broken) object (usually sunglasses), and then a demand for compensatory damages. This updated scam, which preys on the liberal guilt of middle-class college kids, has duped several Columbia students in the past month.

"In terms of archetypes, the student is in the role of the visiting farmer, which was a common role in the nineteenth century," Sante said. "You had the Gold-Brick Scam, which was literally a gold-painted brick, and the Green-Goods Scam, which involved a machine with a crank, where you inserted a blank slip of paper and green currency would come out the other end." He pulled a book off his shelf—"Broadway Racketeers," from 1928—and began naming some more of his favorite city cons: "the Iron Hat, the Puff Racket, the Tat, the Silver Fox Fur—and its variant, the Cat-and-Rat Farm."

The farmers in our story are Francis Bartus and Nick Camp, Columbia freshmen from, respectively, the suburbs of Detroit and Baltimore. Francis has a Mohawk, and Nick wears a goatee. They met last fall during the college's community-service-driven orientation program, "Urban Experience." A few Saturdays ago, they set off for a walk, stopping to admire the Cathedral of St. John the Divine before continuing down Columbus Avenue. "It was a beautiful afternoon," Francis said. "A lot of people out and about."

When they reached 107th Street, Francis felt his arm collide with another arm, which was carrying a bag. "It felt like a bag of ice: heavy and lumpy," he said. The bag dropped and, from the sound of it, a glass bottle broke. The students crossed the street, looked back, and saw a man and a woman, both in hooded sweatshirts, looking at the ground, where "pink stuff" could be seen oozing out of the bag. The couple, who, Nick said, appeared to be of "young middle age: late twenties, early thirties," came after them. Francis and Nick started heading south in a hurry—"He's a big, built guy," Francis said—but they were overtaken. "The guy gets in front of us, and he goes, 'You're going to replace that for her,' " Francis said. " 'She needs that. That's medicine for the *baby*.' "

"The woman looked as if you wouldn't want to ask if she was pregnant," Nick said. "She's ambiguously pregnant."

The man told Francis and Nick to come with them to a pharmacy on Fifth Avenue. Francis whispered to Nick that they should try to run for it, but Nick declined: "I had on flip-flops, and I'm out of shape."

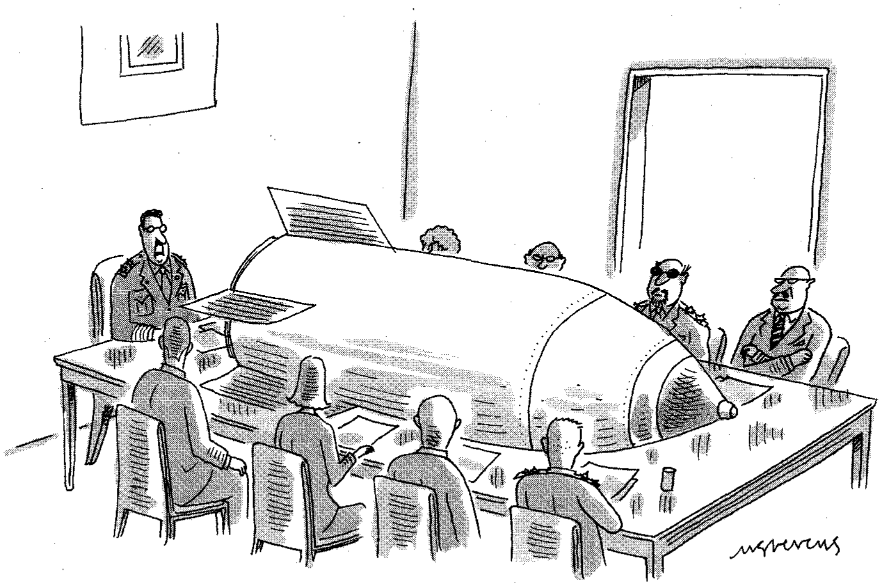
The foursome made it to Central Park West and turned north. "They're pointing out A.T.M.s," Francis said. "I'm, like, 'No, it's got to be a Chase or a Duane Reade.' I didn't want to pay the transaction fee. Finally, the woman says, 'There's a Duane Reade on Amsterdam.' "

"I felt guilty about walking them this way when they had to go the other way," Nick said.

Once inside the Duane Reade, the two boys began plotting a getaway, looking for alternate exits: no luck. So Francis used the A.T.M. and handed the man a twenty-dollar bill: "He's, like, 'No, I don't need your money. I need the medicine. It's forty-two dollars.'"

"This was the first time that number had entered the conversation," Nick said. They gave the man another twenty, and the two pairs parted.

About a week later, after the swindlers pulled the same trick on some stu-



"As you know, all options are on the table."

• •

dents at a street fair on Broadway, an article describing the con appeared in the *Columbia Spectator*, naming Francis as a victim. His mom, back in Michigan, sent him a text message that morning: "You got ho'ed!"

Nick chose not to tell his parents. "Absolutely not," he said.

"In the history of the short con, this is closest to the Wallet Drop," Sante said, after hearing the boys' story. "It falls midway between the mutual finding of the wallet and, on the other hand, the 'Oops I Just Squeezed Mustard on Your Shirt.'"

—Ben McGrath

THE LITERARY LIFE
FREQUENT VISITOR

Alan Bennett, the English diarist, playwright, and sometime monologuist, came to town a few weeks ago for the New York première of his play "The History Boys." He was oddly calm for a man about to open on Broadway. "When I first came here, with Peter Cooke and Dudley Moore and Jonathan Miller, with 'Beyond the Fringe,' in 1962, we didn't really like it," he said one recent morning, over a pretzel croissant at City Bakery, on Eighteenth Street. "The food was awful. We wouldn't have got anything like this." He gestured at the roomful of cappuccino and brioches. "We were sorry that we were going to have to stay here for a year and a half, which you had to do for tax reasons in those days. Shows how arrogant we were. We all signed leases on apartments and resigned ourselves to staying here for all that time. What if we had gotten terrible reviews? We took it for granted at that age that 'they' would either get it or be contemptible for not getting it."

He shook his head, recalling a state of self-confidence that, he insists, has never fully returned. Already famous in his twenties as a comedian—his long mock-sermon on the Bible verse "My brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a smooth man" is still a classic—Bennett, at seventy-one, looks like the scholarship boy that he was fifty years ago, the kind of conscience-stricken lad whose plights and conquests remain at the center of his imagination. Blond bangs, spectacles, soft Lancashire vowels that bellow his cheeks out in startled-looking Os—the whole aura of mole-ish niceness concealing a sharp and, in its way, judgmental temperament.

"Beyond the Fringe" was, forty-odd years ago, a sort of comedy Beatles before the Beatles, and each of its members went on to seek a greater, if more painful, celebrity. "Dudley, after he became famous and went into analysis, became convinced that he had been slighted by the rest of us," Bennett said. "I think he thought that it would be better, on chat shows, to be seen as someone who had had more of an intellectual struggle than he really had. My memory, though, is that he was the most popular of all of us, and a happy man."

Although Bennett's imagination is intensely local—he has a new nonfiction collection, "Untold Stories," which is lit up by an account of the lives of his two aunts, shopgirls in Leeds a half century ago—he has made himself purposefully cosmopolitan, and has become what used to be called a "frequent visitor to these shores."

"When we first came to New York, my accountant had these parties, and people like Alexis Smith would come to them!" he said. "Eve Arden! I never knew what to say. I told Judy Holliday that she was wonderful in 'Born Yesterday,' and she looked at me, and I realized what a stupid thing that was to say to her."

In part because he didn't want to be trapped in his own "Born Yesterday," which the "Fringe" threatened to become, and in part, he admits disarmingly in the new book, because the sudden onset of sexual success made him lose some of his appetite for getting applause from audiences, Bennett decided to quit performing. "I found myself as a writer," he said.

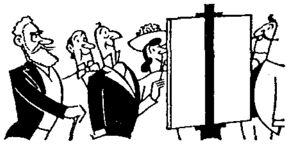
"The History Boys," like almost all of Bennett's work, springs from his ambivalence about England—he laments a lost sense of common experience and, at the same time, resents the restrictions (on homosexuality, among other things) that were the price of that community. "I love Larkin's language and his sadness," he said. "But his politics aren't mine at all. I thought about writing a play about that generation, Larkin and Amis and Osborne, and how they all became more and more right-wing as they grew older, and how they were all too intelligent not to have an ironic sense of how the views they ended up with were exactly the views that they had mocked at the beginning."

Of his ear for dialogue, Bennett said, "I can't write about any place where I don't understand the social structure as it's expressed through the way people speak. I can write in posh, public-school English, because it's what I grew up hearing in cinemas. But I can't write in American, though it fascinates me. The American phrase 'Are you still working on that?,' for instance. Where did that come from? You hear it every day now in restaurants and on planes, and I'm sure you didn't hear it ten years ago." He is impressed, however, by the relative order and civility of the city, and a late night at a New York Barnes & Noble is lovingly described in his new book. "It's not possible to imagine that kind of public civility in England anymore," he said. "Finding out why is part of why I write."

The past decade has seen him struggle both with colon cancer and, for the first time, with larger politics. "I felt strangely serene when I was very ill," he said. "Partly because I didn't feel sick, and partly because all you can do with an illness of that kind is endure it." With the cancer in remission for nine years now, he has become one of the clearest voices in England against the war in Iraq. "My feelings about America, and certainly about New York, haven't changed," he said. "Anyway, New York is to Bush a bit like what Berlin was to Hitler, isn't it? I mean, the place where he's least popular." He went on, "If I had one thing to say to America now, it's don't trust in God. I was fiercely religious as a boy, and it's inoculated me against religion ever since. The one thing I've learned is that, whatever your problems are, God won't really help."

—Adam Gopnik

MISTAKEN IDENTITY DEPT.
A PAINTING'S SECRET



In 1783, to mark his retirement from the Continental Army, George Washington held a farewell dinner at the Fraunces Tavern, on Pearl Street. Earlier in the war, a crew including a number of skilled black sailors had saved Washington's life by evacuating him to Manhattan during the disastrous Battle of Brooklyn, but they weren't invited to the party. So, when the Fraunces Tavern Museum began organizing "Fighting for Freedom: Black Patriots and Loyalists," it seemed only right that the era's best-known portrait of a black mariner should hang as the exhibition's centerpiece.

"I was so thrilled to show the painting. It's in just about every book on African-American history," Nadezhda Williams, the curator of the show, which runs through July, said. "There are only a few images from this period of African-Americans in uniform, and they tend to be generic. This painting was different—an individualistic portrait of what might be a real African-American Revolutionary War veteran."

The painting features a sailor, standing in front of a clipper ship. He is wearing a blue officer's coat and a shirt open to his solar plexus. Dr. Alexander McBurney, a retired Rhode Island urologist, bought the painting for thirteen hundred dollars from an art dealer in 1975, in a fit of bicentennial fever. "Just looking at other people's ancestors doesn't appeal to me at all," McBurney said. "But this is special." Though its provenance is unknown, the painting has been featured in textbooks and television programs and displayed at museums. After agreeing, last June, to lend it to the Fraunces, McBurney decided to get the sailor cleaned up for his New York début.

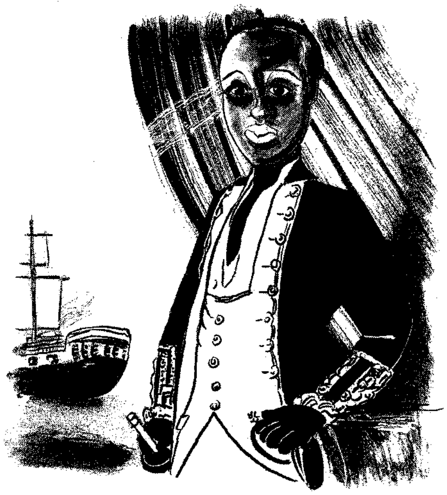
Art restoration projects always entail risk, and the sailor was assessed, for insurance purposes, at up to three hundred thousand dollars. McBurney sent him to Boston's Peter Williams (no relation to Nadezhda Williams), who has a special interest in maritime subjects. He had no idea that his beloved sailor would turn out to be harboring a secret.

"We tried to clean a section of the painting, what would be the sitter's left hand," Williams said. "We applied solvent on black fingers and saw a white hand. At that point, nothing else was important." Continuing with the cleaning, the restorer found that the sailor's bare, brown chest had been painted over a fine white shirt. A few more swipes of solvent revealed fair hair and a white ear. The restorer believes that the original white face was sanded away and painted over with the new black face. Williams guesses that the cover-up work was done not long before McBurney purchased the picture.

Williams says that he had suspicions about the portrait from the start. For one thing, although the painting was webbed with centuries of craquelure, the sailor's face was unblemished. Williams had scanned the painting with an ultraviolet light, which should have identified any areas that had been retouched. "Someone was pretty devious," he said, explaining that the forgers had coated the painting with a special UV-light-blocking varnish. He went on, "We all want black heroes, and that's what's behind this. Create a black hero and you've got a marketable painting."

A few weeks before the painting was due to arrive in New York, Nadezhda Williams, the Fraunces curator, received a call from Dr. McBurney. "I asked him, 'How's our black sailor doing?'" Williams recalled.

"He's just fine, but he's white," McBurney told her.



"First there was denial, thinking Dr. McBurney was joking," Williams recalled. "And then, finally, acceptance and picking up the pieces—especially a piece to fill the blank spot on that gallery wall!" The place of honor in the exhibit is now occupied by Jean-Baptiste Le Paon's portrait "Lafayette at Yorktown." The French General is depicted standing beside the Continental Army's black master spy, James Armistead, who holds Lafayette's horse.

The value of McBurney's picture has dwindled to about three thousand dollars. But McBurney is demonstrating an admirable dance-with-the-date-you-brung mentality. He's even had the sailor restored to his faux blackness. "He's an old friend now," he said. "For more than thirty years, he's occupied a position of honor in the dining room, and he'll stay there."

—Erik Baard

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ANNALS OF CRIME

THE PERFECT MARK

How a Massachusetts psychotherapist fell for a Nigerian e-mail scam.

BY MITCHELL ZUCKOFF

Late one afternoon in June, 2001, John W. Worley sat in a burgundy leather desk chair reading his e-mail. He was fifty-seven and burly, with glasses, a fringe of salt-and-pepper hair, and a bushy gray beard. A decorated Vietnam veteran and an ordained minister, he had a busy practice as a Christian psychotherapist, and, with his wife, Barbara, was the caretaker of a mansion on a historic estate in Groton, Massachusetts. He lived in a comfortable three-bedroom suite in the mansion, and saw patients in a ground-floor office with walls adorned with images of Jesus and framed military medals. Barbara had been his high-school sweetheart—he was the president of his class, and she was the homecoming queen—and they had four daughters and seven grandchildren, whose photos surrounded Worley at his desk.

Worley scrolled through his in-box and opened an e-mail, addressed to "CEO/Owner." The writer said that his name was Captain Joshua Mbote, and he offered an awkwardly phrased proposition: "With regards to your trustworthiness and reliability, I decided to seek your assistance in transferring some money out of South Africa into your country, for onward dispatch and investment." Mbote explained that he had been chief of security for the Congolese President Laurent Kabila, who had secretly sent him to South Africa to buy weapons for a force of élite bodyguards. But Kabila had been assassinated before Mbote could complete the mission. "I quickly decided to stop all negotiations and divert the funds to my personal use, as it was a golden opportunity, and I could not return to my country due to my loyalty to the government of Laurent Kabila," Mbote wrote. Now Mbote had fifty-five million American dollars, in cash, and he needed a discreet partner with an overseas bank account. That partner, of course, would be richly rewarded.

Mbote's offer had the hallmarks of an advance-fee fraud, a swindle whose victims are asked to provide money, information, or services in exchange for a share of a promised fortune. Countless such e-mails, letters, and faxes are sent every year, with a broad variety of stories about how the money supposedly became available (unclaimed estate, corrupt executive, and dying Samaritan being only a few of the most popular). Worley, who had spent his adult life advocating self-knowledge and introspection, seemed particularly unlikely to be fooled. He had developed a psychological profiling tool designed to reveal a person's "unique needs, desires and probable behavioral responses." He promised users of the test, "The individual's understanding of self will be greatly enhanced, increasing the potential for a fulfilled and balanced life." And Worley was vigilant against temptation. Two weeks before the e-mail arrived, he had been the keynote speaker at his eldest granddaughter's graduation from the First Assembly Christian Academy in Worcester, Massachusetts. He cautioned the students about Satan, telling them, "He's going to be trying to destroy you every inch of the way."

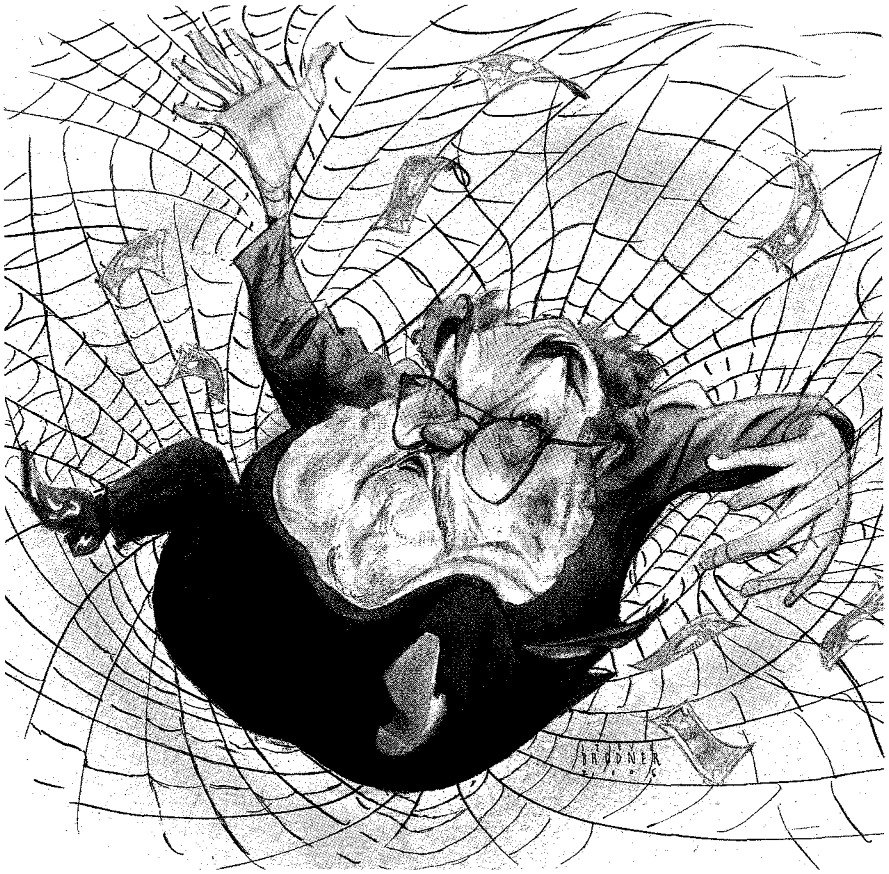
Still, Worley, faced with an e-mail that would, according to federal authorities, eventually lead him to join a gang of Nigerian criminals seeking to defraud U.S. banks, didn't hesitate. A few minutes after receiving Mbote's entreaty, he replied, "I can help and I am interested." His only question was how Mbote had found him, and he seemed satisfied with the explanation: that the South African Department of Home Affairs had supplied his name. When Worley attributed this improbable event to God's will, Mbote elaborated on the story to say that Worley's name was one of ten that he had been given, and that it had been pulled from a hat after much prayer by someone named Pastor Mark. (A more likely possibility is that his e-mail address was plucked from an Internet chain letter, which he received and passed on, that promised a cash reward from Microsoft to anyone who forwarded the letter to others.) In e-mails, phone calls, faxes, and letters during the ensuing weeks, Mbote laid out the plan: If Worley would pay up-front costs, such as fees to a storage facility where the cash was being kept, and possibly travel to South Africa to collect the money, he would receive thirty per cent, or more than sixteen million dollars.

Worley told Mbote that he lived his life with the "utmost integrity" and didn't want to jeopardize that. He also said that he couldn't fund the operation. (Though he would report nearly a hundred and forty thousand dollars in income in 2001, he had declared personal bankruptcy in the early nineties, had relatively little saved for retirement, and wanted to help his grandchildren through college.) No problem, Mbote answered; "investors" would provide up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars for airfare and other expenses needed to move the money to the United States, while Worley would act as middleman and curator of the funds.

As promised, in late August, 2001, Worley received a check for forty-seven thousand five hundred dollars, purportedly from one such investor. It was from an account belonging to the Syms Corporation, the discount-clothing chain whose slogan is "An Educated Consumer Is Our Best Customer." Worley was wary. He called the Fleet Bank in Portland, Maine, where the check had been drawn. The bank told him it was an altered duplicate of a check that Syms had paid to the Maryland office of an international luggage manufacturer.

Every swindle is driven by a desire for easy money; it's the one thing the swindler and the swindled have in common. Advance-fee fraud is an especially durable con. In an early variation, the Spanish Prisoner Letter, which dates to the sixteenth century, scammers wrote to English gentry and pleaded for help in freeing a fictitious wealthy countryman who was imprisoned in Spain. Today, the con usually relies on e-mail and is often called a 419 scheme, after the anti-fraud section of the criminal code in Nigeria, where it flourishes. (Last year, a Nigerian comic released a song that taunted Westerners with the lyrics "I go chop your dollar. I go take your money and disappear. Four-one-nine is just a game. You are the loser and I am the winner.") The scammers, who often operate in crime rings, are known as "yahoo-yahoo boys," because they frequently use free Yahoo accounts. Many of them live in a suburb of Lagos called Festac Town. Last year, one scammer in Festac Town told the Associated Press, "Now I have three cars, I have two houses, and I'm not looking for a job anymore."

STEVE BRODNER



After John Worley received the first e-mail, he replied, "I can help and I am interested."

According to a statement posted on the Internet by the U.S. State Department, 419 schemes began to proliferate in the mid-nineteen-eighties, when a collapse in oil prices caused severe economic upheaval in Nigeria. The population—literate, English-speaking, and living with widespread government corruption—faced poverty and rising unemployment. These conditions created a culture of scammers, some of them violent. Marks are often encouraged to travel to Nigeria or to other countries, where they fall victim to kidnapping, extortion, and, in rare cases, murder. In the nineteen-nineties, at least fifteen foreign businessmen, including one American, were killed after being lured to Nigeria by 419 scammers. Until recently, Nigerian officials tended to blame the marks. "There would be no 419 scam if there are no greedy, credulous and criminally-minded victims ready to reap where they did not sow," the Nigerian Embassy in Washington said in a 2003 statement. The following year, Nuhu Ribadu, the chairman of Nigeria's Economic & Financial Crimes Commission, noted that not one scammer was behind bars. Last November, however, Ribadu's commission convicted two crime bosses who had enticed a Brazilian banker to spend two hundred and forty-two million dollars of his employer's money on a fictitious airport-development deal. (Prosecutions by U.S. authorities are rare; most victims don't know the real names of their "partners," and 419 swindlers are adept at covering their tracks.)

Despite Nigeria's efforts, the schemes have reached "epidemic proportions," according to a publication by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. The agency received more than fifty-five thousand complaints about them last year, nearly six times as many as in 2001. The increase is due in part to the Internet, which makes it easy for scammers to reach potential marks in wealthier countries. "If we educate the public to the point where nobody falls for it, then they'll go out of business," Eric Zahren, a spokesman for the Secret Service, the lead U.S. agency in investigating advance-fee frauds, says. The agency estimates that 419 swindlers gross hundreds of millions of dollars a year, not including losses by victims too embarrassed to complain. In February, the son of a prominent California psychiatrist named Louis A. Gottschalk—he identified what turned out to be early signs of Alzheimer's in Ronald Reagan after analyzing his speech—filed suit seeking to remove his father from control over a family partnership, claiming that Gottschalk had lost more than a million dollars to Nigerian scammers. Some victims try to pass along their losses. The former Iowa congressman Edward Mezvinsky, who had refashioned himself as an international businessman, was caught up in a 419 scam, and during the nineteen-nineties stole from his law clients, friends, and even his mother-in-law to cover his losses. He is serving more than six years in prison after pleading guilty to thirty-one counts of fraud.

Robert B. Reich, the former Labor Secretary, who has studied the psychology of market behavior, says, "American culture is uniquely prone to the 'too good to miss' fallacy. 'Opportunity' is our favorite word. What may seem reckless and feckless and hapless to people in many parts of the world seems a justifiable risk to Americans." But appetite for risk is only part of it. A mark must be willing to pursue a fortune of questionable origin. The mind-set was best explained by the linguist David W. Maurer in his classic 1940 book, "The Big Con": "As the lust for large and easy profits is fanned into a hot flame, the mark puts all his scruples behind him. He closes out his bank account, liquidates his property, borrows from his friends, embezzles from his employer or his clients. In the mad frenzy of cheating someone else, he is unaware of the fact that he is the real victim, carefully selected and fatted for the kill. Thus arises the trite but none the less sage maxim: 'You can't cheat an honest man.' "

"Happy Mother's Day, Mom. And ditto for Thanksgiving and Christmas."

Born in the small town of Zanesville, Ohio, Worley joined the Army after high school. He served for a year as a staff sergeant with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, earning decorations that included a Bronze Star. In 1976, after fifteen years in the military, he was convicted of driving a car for a fellow-serviceman who held up a store; nevertheless, Worley received an honorable discharge and was later pardoned for his role in the robbery. He went to college and divinity school, and got a Ph.D. in psychology through correspondence courses from the Carolina University of Theology, then in Mount Holly, North Carolina. A. Erven Burke, a Baptist pastor who has known Worley for nearly thirty years, has called him a man of "integrity and honesty," dedicated to helping others.

In the early nineteen-nineties, Worley developed a sixty-item questionnaire that he called Worley's Identity Discovery Profile, or W.I.D.P., which sought to quantify a person's temperament in three areas: social and vocational, leadership, and relationships. W.I.D.P. assigned labels to each: Introverted Sanguine, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Melancholy, or Choleric, or a blend, such as Phlegmatic Introverted Sanguine. People whose "living patterns" were primarily focussed on fulfilling a temperament need were labelled Compulsive. Over time, Worley built a successful business selling W.I.D.P. to churches, businesses, schools, individuals, and other counsellors.

Worley's own profile was Melancholy Compulsive in the social-vocational realm, Choleric Compulsive in leadership, and Introverted Sanguine in personal relationships: inward, headstrong, needy. The combination, he said later, made him ripe for scamming. He had abundant time to strategize with Nigerian partners, he tended to ignore warnings, and he yearned for his family's approval. (Anticipating his fortune, he asked his daughters to list all their debts, which he promised to pay.) But Worley's egotism also may have made him think he could gain the upper hand. When Mbote asked him to fly to South Africa to collect the money, he agreed—but only if Mbote reimbursed him for lost wages. Worley set the price at thirty-five thousand dollars a week.

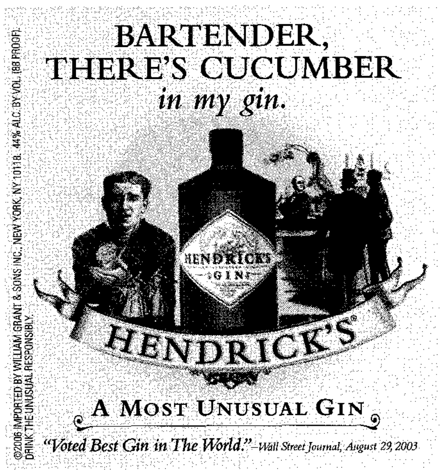
After the Syms check proved false and Mbote failed to send a replacement, Worley told him that their partnership was over. A few days later, though, he began receiving e-mails from someone claiming to be Mohammed Abacha, the eldest surviving son of Nigeria's late dictator General Sani Abacha, who reputedly stole billions from the Nigerian treasury. Mohammed Abacha told Worley that Joshua Mbote had been operating surreptitiously on the Abacha family's behalf, but had bungled so badly that Abacha decided to step forward. He told Worley that the story about buying weapons had been a ruse to protect the Abacha family and their money, which, he said, was actually hidden in Ghana. Soon Worley was put in touch with someone claiming to be the General's widow, Maryam Abacha. In a torrent of phone calls and e-mails, she appealed to Worley. "I learned you wanted to hear from me," she wrote. "Here I am. Help me." In his e-mails, Worley seemed invigorated by this new scenario; he apparently believed that he was on the verge of becoming rich while rescuing a woman in distress.

In late November of 2001, Worley spent several thousand dollars on an attorney who specialized in international tax planning. The attorney warned him against the seeming opportunity, as did Barbara Worley. She knew little about her husband's "project," as he called it, but she didn't like it. Barbara lived a life that revolved, as she put it, "around God and family." In some ways, she still looked to her husband for guidance, as she had when they were in high school; she expressed her opinion, but deferred to his judgment.

Worley dismissed these warnings; now that he had committed money to the partnership, he had a vested interest. By the end of 2001, he was telling the Abachas that he had investigated ways to ship the cash secretly and had searched a half-dozen countries for a bank that would accept a huge deposit without alerting authorities. He reassured them that they had chosen the right partner, and begged for patience: "I am a smart man and very cautious and do not want anything to go wrong." He settled on the Bermuda-based Bank of Butterfield, and in late January, 2002, he told Mrs. Abacha that he had spent forty-three hundred dollars to open an account there. "There will be no trail back to the U.S. and no tax to be paid," he wrote.

Worley's partners soon persuaded him to wire more than eight thousand dollars to retain a Nigerian lawyer and "to cover the bank fees and late fees" that supposedly were the last barriers to the transfer. But, after more delays and growing doubts, Worley told them that he would not travel abroad—the money, they said, had been moved to Amsterdam—to collect the cash. They couldn't change his mind, so they tried a different approach. Mrs. Abacha asked him for help in claiming forty-five million dollars that she told him was hidden in an account of the Federal Ministry of Aviation at the Central Bank of Nigeria. It was a textbook 419 tactic. When Worley doubted Mbote, he disappeared; when Worley wouldn't travel for one treasure, they found another. He sent more money.

Under this new plan, Worley allowed his partners to file false documentation claiming that he was a private aviation contractor to whom the Nigerian government owed forty-five million dollars. At the end of February, Worley crossed another line when a patient named Jennifer Morlock came to his home office for a counselling session. She had barely arrived when he told her he was engaged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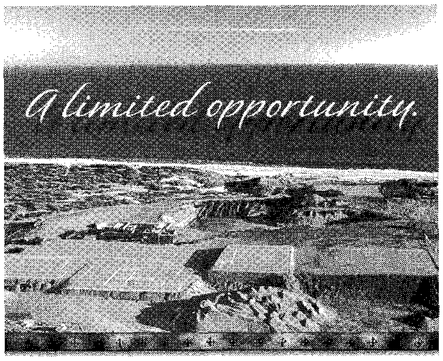

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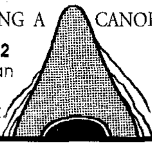

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in a business venture with partners in Nigeria. Violating his profession's code of ethics, he asked to borrow fifteen thousand dollars. Morlock went home, spoke with her husband, and agreed. By noon, Worley was at her door to collect the money. The same day, he went to a nearby liquor store with a Western Union outlet and wired all fifteen thousand dollars to Nigeria. He soon repaid Morlock, with interest, by borrowing on his credit card.

Meanwhile, Worley was growing more and more distressed. The number of correspondents was increasing—at one point, he counted nine—and the spelling of their names kept changing. He complained of receiving letters from "Maram Abacha," "Mariam Abacha," and "Mrs. Maryam S. Abacha." "I would think that everyone would know how to spell their own real name," he wrote testily. "Obviously, someone does not." When he still seemed no closer to receiving the payment he'd been promised, he made a bid for sympathy, falsely telling his partners that he had been given a diagnosis of cancer. That didn't work, so he told them that he was abandoning the project: "To date, I have lost nearly fifty thousand dollars chasing a rainbow with a pot of gold at the end of it. I cannot go any further. It will take me two years to recover from this, and I will probably be dead by then." Mrs. Abacha's reassurances wrung thirteen thousand dollars more from Worley, but in April, 2002, he swore he was through, writing, "I must stop this financial torment and anguish and pray that God forgives me for my pursuit of money, simply put, greed."

For five months, Worley didn't correspond with the Nigerians. Then, in September, 2002, a fax arrived from someone calling herself Mercy Nduka, who claimed to be a confidential secretary at the Central Bank of Nigeria. Nduka told Worley that the Aviation Ministry funds were still waiting for him, and that she was secretly working with the Abacha family. She said that they needed five hundred thousand dollars to bribe five Nigerian bank officials who had the power to release the forty-five million; plus, she said, they needed another eighty-five thousand to cover fees. Worley refused to send more money, so Nduka and her boss, Usman Bello, said that they would borrow it from investors. Worley would pass along the investors' money and then receive the fortune on behalf of the Abachas, with shares going to him, Nduka, and Bello for their services.

Soon men who claimed to be investors began calling Worley from New York and Washington, asking him to provide credit references and requesting that he put up collateral for the loans they were considering making to him. He refused to offer collateral, but that was never the point. The investors' questions and demands made him feel more secure, as though they were truly weighing whether to lend him money. In late November, 2002, Worley received a check for ninety-five thousand dollars, drawn on an account of the Robert Plan Corporation, a Long Island-based insurance company. Without verifying it, as he had done with the Syms check, he deposited it at a branch of Fleet Bank. In fact, the check was fraudulent, but a novice employee at the insurance company approved Fleet's payment inquiry. When the money appeared in Worley's account, Nduka told him to wire eighty-five thousand dollars to a bank in Latvia, which he did. He wired another thirty-eight hundred dollars when Bello said that he needed to buy a Rolex watch to bribe a bank official. Although the Robert Plan employee had approved the check and Fleet had paid it, Worley, according to federal law, was responsible for repayment. (If a fraudulent check is passed deliberately, a depositor can face felony charges.) About a month later, the Nigerians sent Worley a check for some four hundred thousand dollars from a Michigan marketing company. This check was real, but it had been stolen and altered to make Worley the payee. When Worley deposited it at a branch of Citizens Bank near his home, it cleared; following Nduka's instructions, he wired the money to an account in a Swiss bank.

In the meantime, the Nigerians had ensnared the wife of a Mississippi car dealer, a woman named Marcia Cartwright. In October, 2002, she had received a 419 e-mail from a man saying he was desperate to get his money out of Nigeria. Two months later, Cartwright received a check made out to her for nearly a hundred and nine thousand dollars, drawn on the account of a Texas advertising firm, and deposited it at the Farmers & Merchants Bank of Booneville, Mississippi. It cleared, and, on orders from Nigeria, she sent Worley a cashier's check for a hundred and six thousand dollars, keeping the remainder for herself. He deposited the money in his Citizens account on January 15, 2003. The next day, he wired a hundred thousand dollars to the Swiss account.

Worley told Nduka and Bello that he was certain they now had more than enough to bribe the bankers and cover other expenses. Nduka, ever polite, said that they were not quite there. She sympathized with his frustration, and Worley promised to be patient. She asked for another six thousand dollars—the balance of Cartwright's cashier's check—to bribe the telex operators who would execute the transfer. Worley hesitated, but soon sent that money, too. Finally, Nduka told him what he longed to hear: "All is set for the final release of your fund."

That day, the president of the Farmers & Merchants Bank learned that the check Marcia Cartwright had deposited a month earlier had been returned as fraudulent. Bank officials called federal and state authorities, and Citizens Bank, where Worley had deposited Cartwright's cashier's check, was also notified. An investigator for Citizens, a former police lieutenant named Michael Raymond, told Worley what had happened and said that he was investigating potentially fraudulent activity. Worley sent frantic e-mails and made repeated calls to Nigeria, begging for a replacement check. Nduka answered with bad news: Bello had been attacked by robbers and was comatose. But, she wrote, "I have reached an agreement with them for your fund to be released as planned on Friday." All she needed was a thousand dollars to bribe another telex operator.

Worley seemed on the verge of panicking. "If you are my friend, then make it happen tomorrow," he pleaded. "Why are you badgering me with this $1,000? I have gone as far as I will go with this. I am desperate and have nothing else to say at this time. I am emotionally, spiritually, and financially drained." Nduka answered humbly, calling herself "an ordinary woman" who struggled on four hundred dollars a month. Worley responded that Nduka had "touched my heart." He wired the thousand dollars on January 30, 2003.

The next day, Raymond told Worley that the other check he had deposited at Citizens, the check from Michigan for four hundred thousand dollars, was also phony. Worley knew what that meant, and, according to Raymond, disclosed his suspicion that the Robert Plan check was probably fake, too. When Worley got off the phone with Raymond, he was enraged. "I hate being taken advantage of by you evil bastards," he wrote to Nduka. "This is all lies?" He went on, "Your day will come that you will be judged by God, and so will I. And I am ashamed, and shamed, and an embarrassment to my family, who are so precious and Godly people. What a terrible model of a Christian that I am. Thoughts of suicide are filling my mind, and I am full of rage at you despicable people. I hate living right now, and I want to die. My whole life is falling apart, my family, my ministry, my reputation and all that I have worked for all my life. Dear God, help me. I am so frightened."

"Harry insisted on doing everything himself."

• •

In May, 2005, Worley went on trial in U.S. District Court in Boston on charges of bank fraud, money laundering, and possession of counterfeit checks. Worley's overseas correspondents, whose real identities he never knew, disappeared, and were never located or charged. With them went more than forty thousand dollars of Worley's money and nearly six hundred thousand dollars from the checks. Including credit-card interest, money-wiring fees, long-distance telephone charges, and the tax lawyer's bills, Worley's losses may have been closer to eighty thousand dollars.

The prosecutor, an Assistant U.S. Attorney named Nadine Pellegrini, urged the jury to reject suggestions that Worley had simply been scammed. At best, she said, Worley "got in over his head." Pellegrini portrayed Worley as the puppeteer, not the puppet, and said that he knowingly passed bad checks, in the belief that he was entering into a "mutually beneficial arrangement." She focussed on Worley's recognition at various points that he was dealing with liars, and said that he displayed "willful blindness" by ignoring the warning signs of their criminality and his own. Pellegrini said that Worley's claims of innocence were undermined by consistent bad conduct—lying to his wife, borrowing from a patient, plotting to avoid taxes, posing as an aviation contractor, claiming to have cancer, and agreeing to bribe Nigerian bank officials. She was unsparing during her cross-examination. "So you don't have any integrity either, do you, Dr. Worley?" she asked. He answered, "No, I don't."

"Ladies and gentlemen," she told the jury, "it's clear John Worley understands behavior of people and motivation of people, and he could and he can manipulate both behavior and reaction. . . . There is only one story here, and that's the story of John Worley's greed."

Worley's lawyer, a former prosecutor named Thomas Hoopes, cast him as a childlike man who was tricked by sophisticated con artists into a check-cashing scheme. Hoopes stressed that Fleet and Citizens had approved payment on the checks, which, he said, reasonably led Worley to believe they were legitimate. He urged the jury to focus on the final thousand dollars that Worley had sent after he knew an investigation was under way—this was evidence, he said, of Worley's gullibility. He likened Worley to Marcia Cartwright, whom the government viewed as a victim despite her also having passed a bad check. (Cartwright made partial restitution, testified for the prosecution, and was not charged.) Mostly, Hoopes urged the jury to view Worley's acts as foolish, not criminal. Hoopes emphasized that Worley had lost heavily in the scam. "It's not willful blindness," Hoopes said. "It is blind trust."

In addition to witness testimony and lawyers' arguments, the jury was given hundreds of e-mails between Worley and the Nigerians which told a story of their own, about a man transformed by his pursuit of riches. Reading the e-mails, in which Worley displays both cunning and credulousness—sometimes in the same message—it is clear that the Nigerians were able to take advantage of his religious convictions, his stubbornness, and his desire to be a hero to Mrs. Abacha and to his family. Patiently and persistently, the Nigerians turned Worley's skepticism into suspension of disbelief, to the point where he seemed to worry that they might not trust *him.* They made Worley the perfect mark.

The trial took six days, and the jury found Worley guilty on all counts. On February 15th, Worley, now sixty-two, returned to the federal courthouse at the edge of Boston Harbor to face sentencing. Accompanied by more than three dozen family members and friends, he arrived wearing a charcoal suit with a support-the-troops pin on the lapel. U.S. District Judge George O'Toole, Jr., acknowledging the "ordeal" that Worley had been through, said that he was nevertheless bound by the jury's finding. He sentenced Worley to two years in prison, plus restitution of nearly six hundred thousand dollars, and gave him five weeks to turn himself in. Outside the courtroom, Barbara Worley, a stout woman with blond hair, said they would appeal. (They eventually decided not to.) "My husband is the victim here," she said. "It's an atrocity."

One morning a week later, I drove past acres of winter-brown fields to the Worleys' large, blue-gray house, which was owned by a trust created by the Lawrence family, one of Massachusetts's nineteenth-century industrial dynasties. (The Worleys, looking for an inexpensive place to live after John left the Army, believe that divine guidance delivered them to the Lawrences, who needed the home restored and overseen.) Barbara, in a white bathrobe, let me in, saying she thought the meeting had been rescheduled. The house was dark, and the hallways were filled with packing boxes: Worley was preparing for prison, and Barbara was moving to a small house in a nearby town.

Barbara led the way upstairs to a living room with a brass plaque on the door. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," it read. Worley entered, wearing a red-white-and-blue robe with an eagle on the back. He sat in a green leather chair, and fed treats to Pancake, the family cat. He seemed stunned by his misadventures of the past five years. "The communications that I had with those people were so convincing that I really believed that they were real, they were true," he said. "I would question them and they would come back with a response that was adequate to cover my concerns each and every time." Despite everything, he insisted that he still believed he had been dealing with the real Maryam and Mohammed Abacha. "I think they were legitimately trying to use me and my resources to get their funds out of Nigeria into a safe place where they could have access to them," he said. Worley wasn't sure whom to blame for the bad checks, though Nduka was suspect. "Somehow there was a buyoff, a payoff, or something that went on there, and then it got switched to the point where I was then dealing with fraudsters," he said.

When I asked Worley what he wished he had done differently, he didn't answer directly. Instead, he spoke about hoping that the Abachas would get back in touch with him. However, before they could resume work on the multimillion-dollar transfer, he expected them to send the six hundred thousand dollars that he needs for restitution.

"What if they sent you a check?" Barbara demanded. "Would you put it in the bank to see if it cleared again?"

"Yeah."

"John!" she said.

"I don't know," Worley said finally, sounding defeated. "I have to have time to think about what I would do in that situation."

"My husband is naïve," she explained to me. "He trusts people."

A month later, moments after dropping off Worley at a federal prison in Pennsylvania, Barbara called me in tears. "They knew they couldn't go after the Nigerians, so they just get the person they can reach. They're trying to stop people in America from getting involved in it by making an example of my husband," she said. "Why don't they assign an F.B.I. agent to go after the people who scammed my husband? Where's the justice?"

An enduring trait of Nigerian letter scammers—indeed, of most con artists—is their reluctance to walk away from a mark before his resources are exhausted. On February 5, 2003, several days after the checks were revealed as phony, after Worley was under siege by investigators, after his bank account had been frozen, after he had called his partners "evil bastards," Worley received one more e-mail from Mercy Nduka.

"I am quite sympathetic about all your predicaments," she wrote, "but the truth is that we are at the final step and I am not willing to let go, especially with all of these amounts of money that you say that you have to pay back." She needed just one more thing from Worley and the millions would be theirs: another three thousand dollars.

"You have to trust somebody at times like this," she wrote. "I am waiting your response." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

HOW FRED FLINTSTONE GOT HOME, GOT WILD, AND GOT A STONE AGE LIFE

BY LARRY DOYLE

A screeching comes across the sky. Stately, plump Fred Flintstone stood upon the 'saur's head, bearing a boulder of granite, on which a bird perched, its eyes crossed. An orange dressing gown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him by the mild Mesozoic air.

He held his shell aloft and intoned:

Yabba dabba doo!

Afoot and lighthearted, he took to the open road, healthy, free, the world before him, the long brown path before him leading back to Bedrock.

Fred repeating to himself, as he ran, the words of an old song:

Flintstones, meet the Flintstones.

Fred Flintstone never made a lot of money. His name was never in the tablets. He was not the finest cartoon character ever drawn. But he's a *Homo sapien.*

They're the modern Stone Age family.

He is simply a human being, more or less.

From the town of Bedrock.

Stonecutter for the world, toolmaker, stacker of meat, player with reptiles and the nation's cave dwellers, balmy, gritty, city of big boulders, Bedrock.

They're a page right out of history.

It was the best of times, it was the first of times, it was the age of ice, it was the age of lava, it was the epoch of large sloping foreheads, it was the epoch of dictabirds and monkey traffic signals and woolly-mammoth shower massages. All the modern inconveniences.

He feels the wind on his ears, his heels hitting heavily on the gravel, but with an effortless gathering out of a kind of sweet panic growing lighter and quicker and quieter, he runs. Ah: runs. Keep on truckin'. He outlives this day and comes safe home.

See Dino run. Run, Dino, run.

Let's ride with the family down the street.

Let us go then, Hominidae, with the drive-in spread out against the sky, side of piquant bronto ribs from the takeout.

Through the courtesy of Fred's two feet.

What makes Fred run? Wilma, light of his life, fire of his loincloth. His sin, his soul. Wil-ma.

When you're with the Flintstones.

"Oh, Fred," Wilma said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."

Have a yabba dabba doo time.

"Some fun!" Barney said.

A dabba doo time.

"Shut up, Barney," Flintstone said.

You'll have a gay old time.

Once again at midnight nearly, while Fred pondered weak and weary over many a quaint and chiselled tablet of prehistoric lore, while he nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, as of something gently scratching, scratching at the cavern door.

Someday maybe Fred will win the fight.

Nothing's more determined than a cat of sabre tooth—is there? Is there, baby?

And that cat will stay out for the night.

The door was slammed by a thrust of a claw, and then at last all was still. The house was locked, and he thought his stupid cook or the stupid maid must have locked the place up until he remembered the maid was a mastodon and the cook a wacky collection of laborsaurus devices. He pounded on the door, tried to force it with his shoulder, he shouted:

Willllll-maaaa!

And so he beat on, fists against the granite, borne back ceaselessly into the past. ♦

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THE SPORTING SCENE

TITLE IX BABIES

The golf-playing Lendl girls are part of a revolution in the sport.

BY DAVID OWEN

Dayna Ohotnicky is one of the top female golfers at the Torrington Country Club, in northwestern Connecticut. Her parents were both good amateur players, and she learned the game as a child, in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties. In 2004, she made it to the final match in the women's club championship, a tournament she had won twice in the past. On the seventeenth hole, a long par three, her opponent hit a soaring five-wood shot, which ended up a few inches from the cup. "That shot just blew me off the course," Ohotnicky told me recently. She lost the match, one down.

Ohotnicky's opponent was Daniela Lendl, who was eleven years old and was playing with scaled-down golf clubs, manufactured by a company called U.S. Kids. Daniela is the second youngest of the five daughters of Ivan Lendl, the former tennis star, who owns a ten-bedroom house on several hundred acres not far from the club. She prefers to be called Crash, a nickname that she acquired as a young child because she was always charging into things, and she's a little like Ramona, the engagingly self-possessed heroine of the series of children's books by Beverly Cleary. When Crash was eight, she told her father that she wanted to play ice hockey, and he let her stay up one night to watch a televised women's game, in the Olympics. Early in the first period, two players were pressed against the boards, trying to control the puck, and Crash asked, "Why didn't she just smash her into the glass?" Ivan said, "There's no checking in women's hockey," and Crash said, "You're kidding." She watched for a few more minutes, then, disgusted, went up to bed.

Crash—who recently set the women's course record, 68, at Shingle Creek Golf Club, in Orlando, Florida—isn't the only gifted golfer in the Lendl family. Marika, who just turned sixteen and is the eldest of the sisters, and Isabelle, who is fourteen, are both ranked well ahead of her, nationally, and have both won important junior tournaments. Marika and Isabelle have also played in adult events, including the Connecticut Women's Open. Marika played well in a tournament on the Futures Tour, which is the Ladies Professional Golf Association's equivalent of the minor leagues, and in 2004 Isabelle was the youngest player, at thirteen, to qualify for match play in the U.S. Women's Amateur. The youngest sister, Nikola, known as Nikki, is eight years old and is just beginning to play. The only non-golfer among the girls is Caroline, who is Isabelle's fraternal twin; like her mother, she rides horses, and she hopes to compete in the Olympics someday.

The golf-playing Lendl girls are part of a major revolution in their sport which, over the next few years, will transform the L.P.G.A. Tour. Annika Sorenstam, who is thirty-five years old and has been the No. 1 player on the tour for the past five years, is probably the best female player of all time, the women's counterpart of Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods, but after her and a group of other top players the level of play drops off considerably. Heather Daly-Donofrio, who has won two L.P.G.A. events, told me that when she joined the tour, in 1998 (she graduated from Yale in 1991 with a degree in history and turned pro two years later), it was unusual to find more than a few other women on a driving range, and lifting weights was unheard-of. The new young players have more in common, athletically, with Babe Didrikson Zaharias, who dominated women's golf in the late nineteen-forties and early fifties and was a co-founder of the L.P.G.A., in 1950. Zaharias was unafraid to compete against men, and played with an intensity and power that, in her time, were viewed as sinisterly masculine. Ron Sirak, the executive editor of *Golf World*, told me, "These kids are the first generation of Title IX babies. Their mothers were the first beneficiaries of that legislation, which said that colleges had to give equal money to women's sports, and they grew up in families where it was O.K. to play games. It wasn't like in my generation, where athletic girls were viewed as sort of odd." Stina Sternberg, a senior editor at *Golf for Women*, said, "There are many L.P.G.A. tour veterans who are not going to do well in tournaments anymore, and they're going to retire, because no matter how good they are it's going to be tough for them to keep up, week after week, with seventeen-year-old girls who can smash the ball three hundred yards." In addition, the L.P.G.A.'s new stars are cute. On the Web site of Natalie Gulbis, who is twenty-three years old and earned a million dollars on tour last year, there is an advertisement for a wall calendar that features photographs of her modelling bikinis from a line of swimwear that she endorses. (The television audience for women's golf, like the television audience for most sports, consists mainly of men, although the number of young women is growing.)

The former tennis champion Ivan Lendl with his daughters Isabelle, Crash, and Marika. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

CORBIS

The most visible young female player is Michelle Wie—who was born in 1989, has played respectably in several events on the (men's) P.G.A. Tour, and earned ten million dollars or so from endorsements last year, making her, at sixteen, the fifteenth-highest-paid golfer in the world, male or female—but there are many others. The No. 2 player on the women's money list last year, after Sorenstam, was Paula Creamer, who graduated from high school in the middle of the season and is now just nineteen. A co-runner-up at the 2005 U.S. Women's Open, and the winner of the 2005 U.S. Women's Amateur, was Morgan Pressel, who is now, at seventeen, the youngest member of the women's tour. (The tour has a minimum age of eighteen, but Pressel—a niece of Aaron Krickstein, who was a teen-age tennis star in the eighties—got a waiver.) The new stars are determined not to be intimidated by Sorenstam's record. In the first round of the A.D.T. Championship, in West Palm Beach, last November, Creamer challenged Sorenstam on a rules interpretation, and didn't back down, either on the course or at a press conference after the round—a confrontation that, on both sides, appeared to consist mainly of Oedipal subtext.

These talented young women, the Lendl sisters among them, are the direct descendants of Tiger Woods. When he began to dominate the P.G.A. Tour, a decade ago, almost immediately after he joined it, he changed virtually everything about the sport, including old attitudes about practice and physical conditioning. Nowadays, even high-school players hit range balls as doggedly as Ben Hogan did, and the world's top pros work out almost every day, go to bed early, and spend as much time talking with sports psychologists as Arnold Palmer and Lee Trevino used to spend hanging around in bars. Woods, in the minds of many young athletes, turned golf into a primary sport, and Sorenstam proved that the Woods model applied to women as well: she works out as much as he does, and physical training has been a major factor in her domination of the L.P.G.A.

The Lendl girls, like many athletic prodigies, share something else with

Tiger Woods: an extraordinarily dedicated, involved, and ambitious father. (Woods's father, Earl, died last week.) During his playing days, Ivan Lendl seemed so methodical and unemotional that many tennis fans never warmed to him—in 1986, after the second of his three consecutive U.S. Open victories, *Sports Illustrated* ran a cover story called "The Champion That Nobody Cares About"—but he was a remarkable athlete. He was ranked No. 1 in the world for two hundred and seventy weeks, roughly a third of his career, and he was far ahead of his time in his emphasis on physical training, nutrition, mental discipline, and strict routines. He retired from tennis in 1994, at the age of thirty-four, because of a permanent injury to the connective tissue in his spine (caused by years of hard running on tennis courts), and transferred most of his athletic work ethic and competitive intensity to golf.

Lendl, unlike many former athletes, doesn't live in his past, and he has told his daughters very little about his career. "The person who won the tennis tournaments seems like somebody else," he told me. "Who cares what I did fifteen or twenty years ago? I'm much more interested in how to lose five pounds, and how to improve my golf game, and how to help the girls play better." But his past has shaped who he is and how he thinks about sports, and has therefore heavily influenced the girls, whose development he has directed since they were toddlers. (The girls started off playing tennis, but Marika, Isabelle, and Crash had all switched to golf by the age of eleven.) "Can you create athletes, or do they just happen?" he asked me not long ago. "I think you can create them, and I think that Tiger Woods's father proved that. People will sometimes ask me, 'How much talent did you have in tennis?' I say, 'Well, how do you measure talent?' Yeah, sure, McEnroe had more feel for the ball. But I knew how to work, and I worked harder than he did. Is that a talent in itself? I think it is."

The Lendls belong to lots of golf clubs, among them the one that I belong to, a nine-hole course in Washington, Connecticut, about a half-hour from the Torrington Country Club. The pro, Fran Hoxie, was the girls' first teacher, and Marika, Isabelle, and Crash have spent a lot of time on the premises. They are polite, respectful, well behaved, and pleasant to talk to. Crash, who has dark, wavy hair, is more outgoing than her older sisters; of the three, she is the most likely to decide that she would rather help Hoxie hose off golf carts than continue to work on her chipping. Marika and Isabelle are tanned from the many hours they have spent on the driving range and on the course, and both have long, light-brown hair. Marika tends to wear pink laces in her golf shoes, and she has decorated most of her golf clubs with pink paint. Isabelle is a year younger but a couple of inches taller, and she is strong. Her father told me, "You try to arm wrestle with Isabelle, and you're going to lose. I'm not the weakest guy, but if I took her on I would have my hands full."

The club has a waiting list for adults but not for juniors, so the girls got to join several years before their father, who was allowed to play as their guest once a month. The girls did not necessarily look forward to those outings. Lendl is still a pitiless competitor, and he holds nothing back when he plays with children. When he was growing up, in Ostrava, Czechoslovakia, he told me, one of his first athletic ambitions was to beat his mother, who was the No. 2 female tennis player in the country. He did so at thirteen, and began competing in international junior tournaments not long afterward. "I have told the girls since they were little babies that if they ever beat me they will know they earned it, because I will never give them anything," he said. "If Nikki wants to race me from here to there, I won't let her win—she has to beat me." When Ivan does win, he is not above gloating, and the girls have learned to gloat back. After beating Marika once, when she was twelve or thirteen, he was rubbing it in a little, and Marika, furious, said, "Yeah, but I have a better swing." Recently, she beat him for the first time playing from the men's tees—at Carmel Country Club, in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship will be held this summer—and she let him know it. "I was happy she played well," Ivan told me, "but I hate to lose, even to my kids."

Ivan and his wife, Samantha, were married in 1989, when he was twenty-nine and she was twenty-one. Samantha is tall and lovely, with dark-brown hair that she wears almost to her shoulders, and her features run through the faces of

"I still enjoy running my winery, but these days my real passion is the meth lab."

all her daughters. "When Isabelle and Caroline were crawling," Samantha told me recently, "Ivan would say, 'Who can get to the top of the stairs first?' and Marika would throw her sisters out of the way so she could beat them. I would say, 'Ivan, you're going to kill them. Relax a little,' and he would say, 'No, no, no, this is good—it's how you teach them to compete.' "

Late last November, during Thanksgiving week, I went to Sea Island Golf Club, on St. Simons Island, Georgia, to watch Marika and Isabelle compete in the Polo Golf Junior Classic, a major event for young players and the American Junior Golf Association's final tournament of 2005. (Tiger Woods won the boys' title in 1991, when he was fifteen. In 2004, Marika, at fourteen, finished second in the girls' division, after Morgan Pressel.) Ivan accompanied the girls—Samantha isn't a golfer herself, and stays away unless Ivan is busy elsewhere—and supervised them closely during the relatively few hours when they weren't practicing or playing. He isn't one for cozy pep talks. As Marika, whose hair was looking a little windblown, walked toward the first tee on Sea Island's Seaside Course, for the first round of the qualifier, he said, "Fix your hair or you don't start." Pause. "Good luck." He carries a folding chair at tournaments—his back injury makes it difficult for him to stand for long periods—and he plants the chair in conspicuous positions (beside a fairway, behind a green) and watches his daughters closely, sometimes through binoculars. Both girls dislike being scrutinized like this, and each feels more comfortable playing when her father is watching the other. Ivan's attitude is that he's the least of their problems, and that they might as well get used to the binoculars. He doesn't become upset if the girls miss a putt or hit a poor drive, the way some parents of junior players do, but if one of the girls makes what he considers an easily avoidable mental error he sometimes has trouble containing his frustration, and will move to another hole.

In his own athletic career, Lendl succeeded in part by capitalizing on the psychological weaknesses of his opponents. He studied them on videotape, and, using colored markers and diagrams, charted where they hit their serves in certain situations, so that he could anticipate those shots. He also worked tirelessly to control as many elements of his own game as he could. His racquets were always made from the same mold, and they were always strung on the same machine by the same man, Warren Bosworth. One of Bosworth's assistants broke in each racquet before Lendl received it (by playing with it on a tennis court for a total of four hours, with a restringing following each hour of playing time), because brand-new racquets felt too stiff to him. He then used each racquet for just a single ball change, perhaps forty minutes or an hour. When he travelled to a major tournament, he often carried four dozen. His feel was so exquisitely sensitive, he says, that he could tell the difference in spin between a ball hit with a racquet on which the logo had been stencilled in red paint and one hit with a racquet on which the logo had been stencilled in black, because the pigments had different coefficients of friction. "When you want to be at the top, you can't leave anything to chance," he told me. "That's what I'm trying to explain to my kids. They don't understand it yet."

At Sea Island, Marika and Isabelle both easily qualified for match play—Marika after shooting even par in the first qualifying round, and Isabelle after shooting one over in the second, on an extremely windy day, when no girl broke par. Both sisters then won their first two matches, and faced each other in the quarter-finals. Isabelle ended up beating Marika, one up, despite being three holes down at one point. Isabelle told me, "I tried to pretend that she was just another opponent, but that was hard, and our match was really tense, because we've had this ongoing battle at practice. When I was three down, I was thinking, Don't give up, just keep playing, keep calm—although I knew it wasn't going to be a fun car ride home either way."

Earlier, I had asked Ivan if it was hard for him to watch the girls compete against each other—Samantha can't stand it—and he said that it was not. He said that he sometimes secretly roots for one or the other, depending on which one he feels would be helped the most, psychologically, by a victory, or by a defeat. When Marika was a rising junior tennis player, Ivan asked her teacher, Kenyon Clark, to pair her not with a talented boy her own age but with the boy's older brother, who was an even better player. Clark asked why, and Ivan said, "Because I want her to lose."

All five Lendl sisters used to attend the Washington Montessori School, in Connecticut, during the fall. (Their mother, who is a certified Montessori instructor, also taught there part time.) Every winter, the family would move to a house they own in Vero Beach, Florida, where golf courses and driving ranges weren't buried under snow, and when they were in Florida the girls were home-schooled by Samantha. Two years ago, Marika enrolled in the David Leadbetter Golf Academy, at I.M.G. Academies, in Bradenton, Florida, in the hope of lifting her game to the next level, and the family bought a condominium in an on-campus development intended for the families of students. (Their condo is the largest in the development, with three bedrooms upstairs, plus a room on the ground floor which they use as a fourth bedroom, and the seven Lendls, their three large dogs, and their huge collection of sports equipment fill it up.) Isabelle and Crash started full time at Leadbetter the following year. At the academy, roughly half of each weekday is devoted to schoolwork and half to golf and intensive physical training. Isabelle begins her day at six-forty-five, with a ninety-minute workout at I.M.G.'s International Performance Institute. (She and her classmates pause at seven-thirty to drink a "shake" made from Gatorade and whey powder.) Marika's schedule is similar, although her daily workout is in the evening. Nikki and Caroline attend a private day school elsewhere in town.

I visited the Lendls in Bradenton last December. There was a huge international junior tennis tournament taking place on the campus at the time, and Ivan and I spent part of an afternoon wandering among the courts, occasionally watching the tennis but mainly chatting with people he knew from his tennis days. One of them was a scout from an equipment company, an old friend of his, who was evaluating professional prospects among the fourteen-and-unders. The scout told me, "At this level, to find the best players you look for the craziest fathers." A little earlier, in a parking lot, Lendl and I had run into one of the craziest tennis fathers of all time: Jim Pierce, whose daughter, Mary, turned pro at fourteen, won two Grand Slam singles titles, and was at one point ranked No. 3 in the world. Jim Pierce, who inspired the so-called Jim Pierce Rule, which prohibits an extensive menu of thuggish courtside acts, once screamed, "Mary, kill the bitch!" from the stands during a tournament, and was later banned from women's tennis events for five years following disruptive behavior at the 1993 French Open. In the I.M.G. parking lot, Pierce opened the trunk of his car, found a heavily highlighted copy of a tennis instruction book that Lendl wrote twenty years ago, and asked Lendl to sign it.

Later, I asked Lendl where he placed himself in the universe of famous sports dads. He said, "Behind every successful athlete there is a strong person who helped them early on. Mostly, it's fathers, but for Martina Navratilova it was her stepfather, for Martina Hingis it was her mother, and so on and so on." In the beginning, he said, all young athletes play to please that adult, but, eventually, if they are to advance they must assume responsibility for their own ambitions. "There is a time—which is a very hard time to pinpoint, I think—when the parent must step back. I'm trying to make sure that I'm not too early, so that the girls are not lost, and not too late, so that I'm not in the way. I think that when Earl Woods stepped back a little bit was when Tiger really took off as a golfer. It's a delicate balance."

Lendl has a classic jock's sense of humor, strongly shifted toward the practical-joke-and-trash-talk end of the comedy spectrum. He once went bike riding near his home in Connecticut with a good friend, a golf pro, and one hill was so steep that the pro had to get off his bike and walk. A week or so later, Lendl had Warren Bosworth call the pro, pretending to be a reporter from a golf publication. Bosworth said that he was working on an article about physical conditioning, and then asked questions about things like diet and stretching and exercise. Eventually, the discussion came around to bicycling, and Bosworth said, "Tell me. When you come to a steep hill, do you ride your bike or push it?" There was a long silence. Then the pro said, "Tell Ivan to go fuck himself."

A FEW FACTS

The chiming clock. The girl at her desk sneezing.
The hiss of traffic after rain has sleeked the street.
The chime sounding off the silent library air.
Outside, a kind of monumental, after-icy-rain
relenting, something loosening and the ground
going soft, glistening, the water on it taking in
the world, the sycamore drawing water up
its roots, the huge trunk sopping it. In the room
the vase of Cremona daisies: yellow, white,
and flaming orange. Shoes and books, a lit figure
bent to her work, lifting her shoulders slowly
up and looking out, letting a breath go. Smiling
when the child comes in with a question. Outside,
the spreading yellow maple shedding branches. A cairn
of bulky logs. Birds from dawn to dusk at the feeder:
black flashings across the blank window. The cats
dazzled, feeling the old hunger. Now the child
is shaping an arabesque by the stove; now she is
wrapped up in a rug, reading; now she's sitting up
in bed, a duchess demanding her cardigan, grinning
at the laden tray—its porridge, milk, tea, striped napkin
in its ring—at light seeping through blue curtains.

—Eamon Grennan

At home, Lendl's sense of humor often produces a comparable reaction. Lendl has always loved German shepherds, which—unlike the human members of his household—he can train to be unfailingly obedient and loyal. When he bought his current shepherd, Gunner, he told Nikki that he now knew he would never forget her birthday, since Gunner had been born on the same day. Nikki, rather than being offended or hurt, brushed off the remark as typical. At one point during my visit, Ivan was hollering up the stairs about homework, and Nikki grinned at me and mouthed, "Don't pay any attention." In a household where the female-to-male ratio is six to one, Ivan sometimes seems like a dictator and sometimes like a minor functionary with purely ceremonial duties. He himself was a tightly disciplined only child, so the hubbub of a herd of willful girls is a new experience for him. Samantha told me, "All the girls sort of gang up on him, and I have to say I feel sorry for him. He and the girls have an ongoing battle about control: they're trying to take it, and he's trying to maintain it." Shortly before dinner one evening, Ivan asked Isabelle to ask Caroline to come downstairs, and Isabelle asked Crash to hand her her laptop so that she could instant-message her—and this was almost too much for Ivan, who was momentarily transformed into a sputtering sitcom dad. The girls have their moments with each other, too, and family meals are often preceded by brusque declarations of what they won't eat, or whom they won't sit between.

For the most part, though, they get along well. The Lendl girls are rivals—when I asked Crash what it's like to play against her sisters, she said, "Annoying"—but they have practiced together for years, and they support one another, to some extent, when they aren't in direct competition. They also usually play with real enthusiasm. One day a few summers ago, Ivan told Crash that he had to go out of town on Sunday and that if she wanted a game that day she'd better find someone else to play with. When he got up to go to the airport, he found Crash in the bathroom with a club directory open on her lap and a cordless phone in her hand. "It was six o'clock in the morning," Ivan told me, "and she was already up to the H's." One of the people she had called was a woman she had played with in the past. The woman had been to a party with her husband the night before and hadn't got to bed until 3 A.M., and was not interested in golf. "What about your husband?" Crash asked. The woman said that he was asleep. Crash said, "Well, wake him up and ask him."

The ability to maintain that kind of passion through adolescence and into adulthood is not a given, however, especially considering how exhaustively the girls have trained and how young they were when they began. Ivan is properly disdainful of the directionless hedonism of the average, unfocussed American teen-ager, but directionless hedonism and lack of focus are powerful forces, and you never know.

Samantha wants all the girls to go to college, while Ivan tends to think of college primarily as an optional golf-seasoning program. (He himself refused to go, and viewed any schooling beyond high school as an impediment to his progress as an athlete.) College is a looming issue for most of the talented young women who are almost old enough to join the L.P.G.A. Tour. Stina Sternberg, the *Golf for Women* editor, told me, "Even five years ago, nobody got out on the L.P.G.A. Tour before they graduated from college, but this trend of the players turning pro right out of high school, or even before they graduate, is not going to go away." The professional golfer Tom Watson graduated in 1967 from the same high school, in Kansas City, that I did six years later. I remember his reputation as a teen-age golfer, but I also remember him as the quarterback (and leading rusher) on the varsity football team, which won the conference championship when he was a senior, and as a shooting guard in basketball. He would put away his golf clubs every August, when football practice started, and not take them out again until spring. He went to Stanford without a scholarship, walked on to the golf team, and didn't make his decision to try the P.G.A. Tour until he was close to graduation. Today, good young athletes usually specialize in a single sport in early childhood, and no genuine golf prospect would risk a career-ending injury by running quarterback keepers on half-frozen Midwestern football fields. (The Lendl girls are not allowed to ski.) When I described Watson's career path to Ivan Lendl, he said, "The world has changed."

Six years ago, at a youth golf clinic in Oklahoma sponsored by the Tiger Woods Foundation, a participant asked Woods if he knew of any young Tigers coming along, and Woods said that one of the best prospects, in his opinion, was his own niece, Cheyenne Woods, who is Marika's age and who learned to play golf the way Tiger himself did, by watching Earl Woods hitting golf balls in a garage. Cheyenne has played in many of the same tournaments that the Lendl sisters have, and she and Isabelle and Marika are separated by just a few positions among the top players in *Golfweek's* junior rankings. Recently, I asked Woods whether Cheyenne was planning to go to college, and he said, "I certainly will want her to go, and to get her degree. You have no guarantee, as an athlete, that you will succeed once you make the decision to turn pro and try to do it for a living, and you can get hurt at any time." Woods left Stanford after two years, partly because remaining in school any longer would have been financially irresponsible, but he views those two years as the best of his life.

Several years ago, Isabelle and I played a nine-hole match. It was just before her game took off, at probably the last moment when a not-completely-terrible middle-aged guy could still beat her. She praised my decent shots and graciously conceded short putts, and we spent a very enjoyable hour and a half together. She said that her twin sister, Caroline, was attending a birthday party that afternoon, and we agreed that that was a waste of a nice summer day. I said the thing about golf that grownups always say to kids, that it's a game for a lifetime, and I also said that no matter what Isabelle and her sisters ended up doing with their lives I was certain that golf would always be part of it. I told her about my brother, who was the captain of his golf team in high school and in college and now works as an advertising executive in New York City and sometimes gets to play with clients.

"No," Isabelle said firmly, as we walked up the fifth fairway. "I'm going to play on tour." ♦

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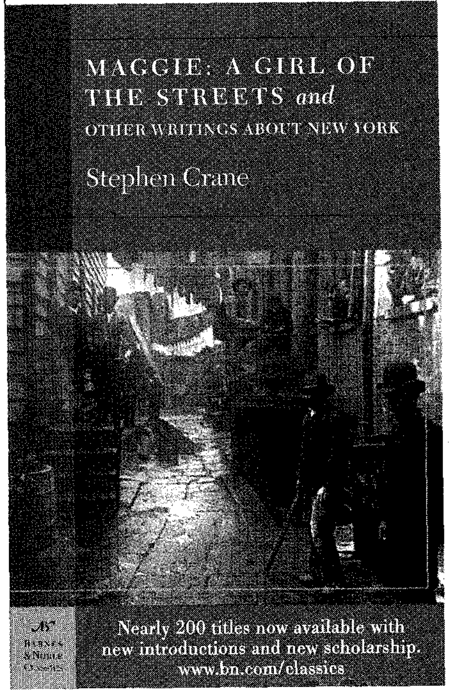
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THE ONLINE LIFE

ME MEDIA

How hanging out on the Internet became big business.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

In August, 1995, when Netscape issued stock on the Nasdaq and became the first major Internet company to go public, Mark Zuckerberg was about to enter the sixth grade at a middle school in Ardsley, a small town in Westchester County. He had a new desktop computer—a Quantex 486DX with an Intel 486 processing chip—and had bought a book called "C++ for Dummies," to teach himself how to write software. "I just liked making things," he recalled recently. "Then I figured out I could make more things if I learned to program." By the time he finished ninth grade, at Ardsley High, he had designed a computer version of the board game Risk, in which rival forces battle for global domination. Zuckerberg's game was set in the Roman Empire, which he was studying in Latin class, and featured a virtual general called Julius Caesar, who was such an able military strategist that even Zuckerberg had trouble defeating him.

Two years later, his parents, a dentist and a psychiatrist, sent him to Phillips Exeter Academy, in New Hampshire, where, during the spring of his senior year, he and a roommate, Adam D'Angelo, wrote some software for WinAmp, an MP3 player, which chose songs from a user's digital library based on his previous selections. If a user had been playing Garbage, or the Clash, the program that Zuckerberg and D'Angelo created might pick a song by Green Day. They called their program Synapse and posted it on the Web, where it proved popular, especially after the technology site Slashdot.org linked to it. Several software companies, including Microsoft, approached Zuckerberg about acquiring it, but none made a formal offer. "What they really wanted was for us to come and work for them," Zuckerberg told me. "We didn't want to do that."

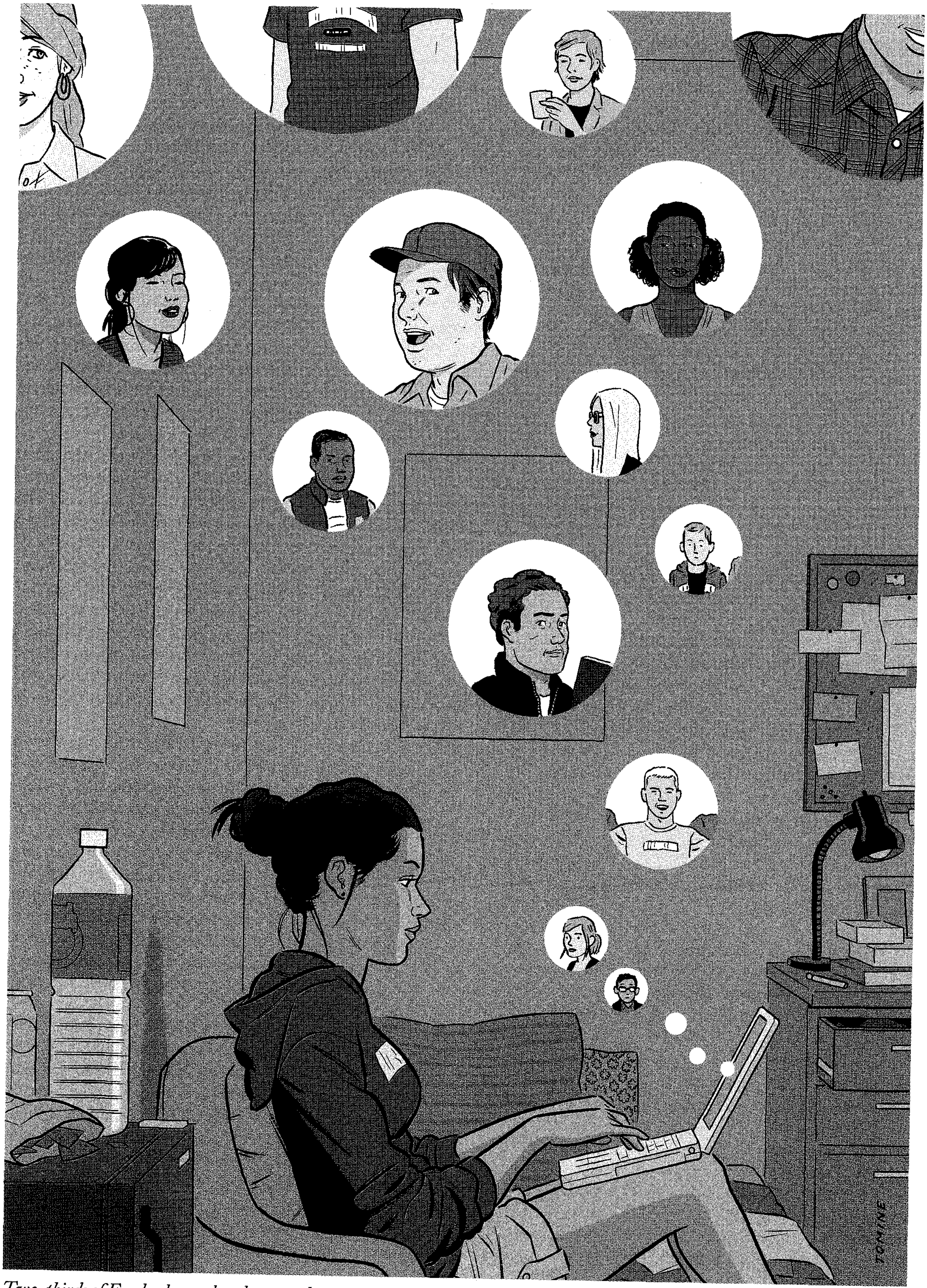
In the fall of 2002, Zuckerberg enrolled at Harvard, where he decided to major in psychology. "I just think people are the most interesting thing—other people," he said. "What it comes down to, for me, is that people want to do what will make them happy, but in order to understand that they really have to understand their world and what is going on around them." Between classes, he continued to write programs, including one called Coursematch, which enabled students to find out who was enrolled in a particular class. Early in his sophomore year, he built a Web site called Facemash, a Harvard version of HOTorNOT.com, a site where people post sexy photographs of themselves that others rate on a scale of one to ten. Most Harvard residential houses, including Kirkland House, where Zuckerberg lived, had Web sites displaying photographs from student I.D.s. Zuckerberg downloaded some of the pictures—of men and women—and posted two at a time on a Web page, inviting other students to vote on which person was more attractive. The votes were then converted into a cuteness top-ten list for each house.

Within a few hours after he posted the first photographs, about four hundred and fifty people had visited the site, and more than twenty-two thousand votes had been recorded. Then, without warning, the university blocked Zuckerberg's Internet access; some students and professors had complained to Harvard authorities that the site was offensive. Harvard's Administrative Board summoned Zuckerberg to a hearing, accusing him of violating students' privacy and of stealing the university's intellectual property by downloading pictures without permission. The board could have suspended Zuckerberg, or even expelled him. Instead, after he agreed to take down the Web site, he escaped with a warning. That night, he and his roommates celebrated with a bottle of champagne.

Zuckerberg was acquiring a reputation on campus as a programming prodigy. Soon after Facemash was shut down, he was invited to help write code for an ambitious Web site conceived by three Harvard seniors: Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss, twin brothers; and Divya Narendra. Since late 2002, the Winklevosses and Narendra had been talking about creating a Web site for Harvard students modelled on "social networking" sites like Friendster and Tribe.net, which were just beginning to catch on. The sites, which invited members to post a photograph and a few personal details—a profile—and link to other members, exploited the peculiar logic of networks, by which large numbers of people are connected through a small number of intermediaries and become part of a vast virtual community. By the fall of 2003, the Winklevosses and Narendra, with the help of a couple of student programmers, had designed a prototype, which they called HarvardConnection. At Narendra's suggestion, the Winklevosses approached Zuckerberg about helping them finish the site, which they hoped to launch before they graduated, the following June. "We met Mark, and we talked to him, and we thought this guy seems like a winner," Tyler Winklevoss said to me recently.

Zuckerberg began working on HarvardConnection in November, 2003. At the same time, he pursued his own projects. Like many other colleges, Harvard offers every freshman a copy of the class directory, known as the "facebook," which features a photograph of each member, accompanied by a few identifying facts, such as name, date of birth, home town, and high school. For some time, Harvard had been planning to put the facebook online; Zuckerberg decided to do the job himself. "I just thought that being able to have access to different people's profiles would be interesting," he re-

ADRIAN TOMINE



Two-thirds of Facebook members log on at least once a day; the typical user spends twenty minutes on the site.

called. "Obviously, there's no way you can get access to that stuff unless people are throwing up profiles, so I wanted to make an application that would allow people to do that, to share as much information as they wanted while having control over what they put up."

Zuckerberg discussed the idea with two of his roommates, Chris Hughes and Dustin Moskovitz, who agreed that it was a good one. In late January, 2004, during a weeklong break between semesters, he remained in his dorm room, working through the night on his site. "The challenge was to make it work," he said. "I don't like to design things to look showy or cool. It wasn't like I was looking at it and saying, 'This is sweet.' He paused, then added, "I don't use the word 'sweet' anymore." In ten days, he had completed most of the site, which he was determined to keep simple. Anybody with a Harvard e-mail address could join and create a profile, which consisted of a photograph and some personal information, such as the user's major; club memberships; taste in films, books, and music; and favorite quotes. There was a search box to help users call up other profiles, and a "poking" button, which they could use to let other people know that their profiles had been viewed. Users could also link to their friends' profiles—a feature popularized by Friendster. To test the site, Zuckerberg created three sample profiles, which looked pretty good. Then he created profiles for himself and for Hughes and Moskovitz.

Thefacebook.com went up on Wednesday, February 4, 2004. "It was a normal night in the dorm," Moskovitz recalled. "When Mark finished the site, we told a couple of friends. And then one of them suggested putting it on the Kirkland House online mailing list, which was, like, three hundred people. And, once they did that, several dozen people joined, and then they were telling people at the other houses. By the end of the night, we were, like, actively watching the registration process. Within twenty-four hours, we had somewhere between twelve hundred and fifteen hundred registrants."

On February 9th, the *Harvard Crimson* ran a story about Thefacebook.com, in which Zuckerberg referred to Harvard's plan to put the facebook online. "I think it's kind of silly that it would take the university a couple of years to get around to it," he said. "I can do it better than they can, and I can do it in a week." The popularity of Zuckerberg's site seemed to justify his arrogance. "Within a week, it felt like the whole school had signed up," Olivia Ma, a twenty-three-year-old Harvard senior who was the fifty-first person to join Thefacebook.com, recalled. "Everyone was talking about it." By the end of February, about three-quarters of the undergraduates had signed up.

By luck or design, Zuckerberg had tapped into a powerful yearning: the desire of hundreds of ambitious and impressionable young people to establish themselves and make friends in an unfamiliar environment. And unlike the users of sites that are open to anyone, such as Friendster and MySpace, which launched in January, 2004, Facebook's members had a physical location, professors, and classes in common. "I remember the buzz of excitement around the fact that that kid whose profile you had checked out the night before might be sitting at the table next to you in the dining hall the next morning at breakfast," Olivia Ma wrote in a recent e-mail.

The site quickly became a platform for self-promotion, a place to boast and preen and vie for others' attention as much as for their companionship. "I remember people competing to see how many 'friends' they could accumulate and how quickly, and tracking how many 'friends' they shared in common with other 'friends,'" Ma said. "The concept of 'Your Social Network,' which in those early stages could be represented visually as a diagram on your screen at the click of a button, was mind-blowing." Before long, some students were listing hundreds of friends. Hilary Thorndike, a schoolteacher who graduated from Harvard in 2005 and still uses Facebook, has more than eight hundred friends on the site. "I always find the competitive spirit in me wanting to up the number," she wrote in an e-mail.

On Friendster, and especially on MySpace, some users are playing roles: thirteen-year-olds pretending to be nineteen, virgins pretending to be vixens, forty-two-year-old F.B.I. agents pretending to be adolescent girls. Because Facebook users were required to have a valid Harvard e-mail address, most were students, and many were willing to post their e-mail and home addresses, their cell-phone numbers, and even their sexual orientation. Most users worried more about wasting time than about security. "It was viewed as an addictive guilty pleasure—lots of students using language like 'resisting' and 'holding out' when describing their hesitation to join," recalled a Harvard graduate who joined Facebook as a senior, in February, 2004. "'Give in to the temptation!' was the merry cry."

Within a couple of weeks, students at other colleges were e-mailing Zuckerberg to ask for access to Facebook. The site was easy to replicate—in the jargon of the computer industry, it was "scalable"—and Zuckerberg enlisted Moskovitz, who had a part-time job at a campus computer lab, to help him expand it. He was confident that Facebook could be just as successful at other colleges; the challenge was how to maintain the site's clubby appeal while attracting more members.

On most social-networking sites, a search box allows users to call up profiles of people anywhere on the site. Zuckerberg decided that Facebook members would be allowed to view only the profiles of other students at their own colleges, with one exception. If they obtained the permission of a student at another school, they could add that person to their list of friends. In retrospect, this decision was critical to Facebook's success, because it preserved the site's intimacy.

At the end of February, 2004, Thefacebook.com launched simultaneously at Columbia, Yale, and Stanford, where it quickly became just as popular as it was at Harvard. By the middle of June, when the academic year ended, the site had expanded to forty schools, and it had a hundred and fifty thousand registered users. Several venture capitalists had already approached Zuckerberg about investing in the site. Zuckerberg rebuffed their offers, deciding to finance Facebook with a substantial investment from another Harvard student, some money of his own, and revenue from advertisements, which he had begun to sell. Fortunately, his operating costs were low. Moskovitz worked for nothing. (Zuckerberg eventually gave him an ownership stake.) The biggest expense was an eighty-five-dollar monthly fee for renting space on a server.

In June, 2004, Zuckerberg, Moskovitz, and another friend from Harvard, Andrew McCollum, moved for the summer to Silicon Valley, where they rented a house in Palo Alto, with four bedrooms and a pool, and called it Casa Facebook. Although many colleges were closed for the summer, traffic on the site was still growing rapidly, and there was a lot of maintenance work. "We were doing fourteen- or sixteen-hour days," Moskovitz said. "We had, like, a kitchen table, which we sat around. We had our laptops there, and we, like, hammered away."

By September, Thefacebook.com had a quarter of a million users, and Zuckerberg and Moskovitz decided not to return to Harvard. They wanted to expand the site to several hundred more schools that fall, and they needed money to buy servers. (Renting server space was no longer practical.) Zuckerberg began to meet with local venture capitalists and entrepreneurs, including Peter Thiel, the co-founder of PayPal, the online payments company. Matt Cohler, a former business associate of Thiel's, who now works for Facebook (the site dropped the "the" from its name last fall), recalled the meeting: "He started telling us the Facebook story. It was pretty quickly apparent that this business was taking on aspects of an eBay or a Google, something with just an extraordinary growth rate. About eight minutes into the talk, it was clear to me that Peter was going to invest."

Thiel lent Facebook five hundred thousand dollars in return for a seat on its board and an option to purchase an undisclosed ownership stake at a future date, an arrangement that could well prove lucrative. According to comScore Media Metrix, a company that tracks online traffic, in 2005 Facebook was the second-fastest-growing major site on the Internet. Only MySpace, which has seventy-five million users, a population ranging from teen-agers to senior citizens, grew faster. Today, Facebook has about seven and a half million registered members, most of whom attend one of the more than two thousand U.S. colleges where the site is accessible, though it has recently expanded to universities in the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Australia. In terms of total page views, it is now the seventh-most-popular site on the Web, according to comScore Media Metrix.

Early in 2005, Zuckerberg and his colleagues moved the company from Casa Facebook to an airy suite of offices on University Avenue, a couple of blocks from the Stanford campus. When I visited, in March, workmen were cleaning a space recently vacated by another firm, so that Facebook could expand into it; there are now more than a hundred people on the company's payroll. Zuckerberg, whose title is C.E.O., works on the second floor, surrounded by programmers. On the third floor are most of the "adults" Zuckerberg has hired: advertising-sales staff, customer-service representatives, and senior executives. On a whiteboard next to the customer-service department, somebody had copied a message from a user: "My grandma was wondering if there would possibly be a Facebook for nursing homes in the near future. She thinks it's a good idea to stay in contact with her old college friends. She would love it. Thank you."

In a conference room on the third floor, I met with Jim Breyer, a well-known Silicon Valley venture capitalist, whose company, Accel Partners, has invested about fifteen million dollars in Facebook, in the belief that eventually it will make a lot of money, partly through advertising sales. Since 2002, the online ad market has expanded by more than fifty per cent, while advertising in magazines and newspapers has hardly grown at all. Some sites that carry a lot of online advertising, like Google and Yahoo, are highly profitable. "Clearly, there are some fundamental characteristics of the media business that are forever changed," Breyer said. "It's not that the Googles and Facebooks are going to suddenly make the old-media companies obsolete. However, three to five years from now, the very best media companies will have Facebook- and Google-like characteristics."

Indeed, in the past eighteen months, the New York Times Company paid more than four hundred million dollars for About.com, a site that offers information on health care, personal finance,

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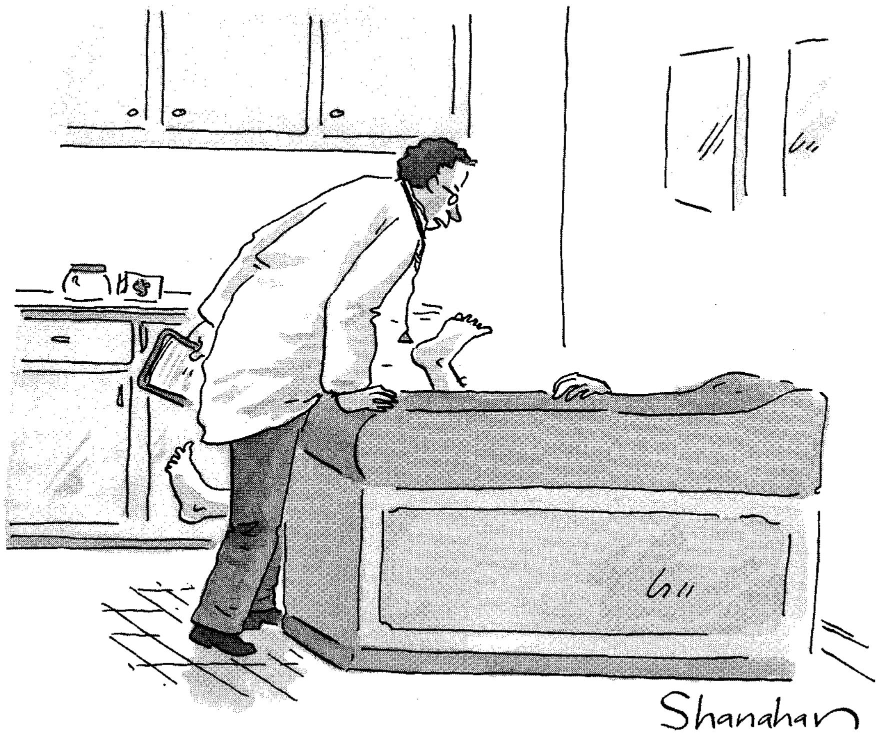


"Now it's broken."

• •

and travel, among other topics; NBC Universal paid six hundred million dollars for iVillage.com, a site aimed at women; and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation purchased the company that owns MySpace for five hundred and eighty million dollars. None of these Web sites have made much money, but their new owners are gambling that they will.

Zuckerberg arrived late to our meeting. He often maintains a hacker's schedule, working late into the night. He was wearing a white T-shirt, a hooded fleece sweatshirt, and a pair of new Adidas slides, which he complained hurt his feet. He removed his shoes and sat down on a couch, folding his legs beneath him, lotus style. On his Facebook profile, Zuckerberg says that one of his interests is meditation. The others are information flow, exponential growth, minimalism, driving, making things, social dynamics, and domination.

Slim and bony, of medium height, Zuckerberg is twenty-one but looks younger. He has curly light-brown hair, blue eyes, a prominent nose, and pale skin. Under each of his eyes is a faint purple patch from lack of sleep. For ten minutes or so, he responded to my questions monosyllabically, allowing lengthy pauses between his answers. Gradually, though, he relaxed, and tried to explain what distinguished Facebook from other sites. "I mean, one way to look at the goal of the site is to increase people's understanding of the world around them, to increase their information supply," he said. "The way you do that best is by having people share as much information as they are comfortable with. The way you make people comfortable is by giving them control over exactly who can see what."

User control may turn out to be Facebook's most important asset. During the past few months, the newspapers have been full of stories about sexual predators using social-networking sites to find victims. In February, the attorney general of Connecticut, Richard Blumenthal, began an investigation of minors' access to pornography on MySpace, and local police announced that as many as seven teen-agers in the state may have been assaulted by men they had met through the site. In April, the company hired a former federal prosecutor to be its first chief security officer. Facebook has also received some negative publicity. There have been numerous reports of campus police shutting down keg parties that were announced on the site, and last year a student at Fisher College, in Boston, was expelled after writing in his Facebook profile that a police officer at the school "needs to be eliminated."

In general, though, Facebook's membership restrictions and privacy features have protected users. By altering the settings on their profiles, they can choose to make them visible solely to their friends, to other undergraduates, or to everybody at the university. By entering names into a box, users can deny particular individuals access to their profiles. "The problem Facebook is solving is this one paradox," Zuckerberg said. "People want access to all the information around them, but they also want complete control over their own information. Those two things are at odds with each other. Technologically, we could put all the information out there for everyone, but people wouldn't want that because they want to control their information."

Early on, Zuckerberg enabled users to send and receive messages. A few months later, he permitted them to create user groups. Harvard Facebook members belong to more than ten thousand, many of which exist only online. The appeal of such groups—including Harvard People for the Eating of Tasty Animals (forty members), I Went to a Public School...Bitch (twenty-five hundred members), Jews Who Love Booze (fifteen members), and The We Need to Have Sex in Widener Before We Graduate Interest Group (a hundred and forty members)—is that they allow students to promote different aspects of their identities while showing off their collegiate wit. "It may look like dog food," says the home page of the group Cracklin' Oat Bran Is the Shit (eighty-four members). "But we all know that cracklin' oat bran is an amazing cereal. We don't just eat it for breakfast, either. We eat it for every meal of the day. Cracklin' oat bran isn't just a cereal; it's a way of life."

Last fall, Facebook launched a new photo application, which allows users to attach to their profile as many digital pictures as they want. Every day, more than a million and a half pictures are uploaded to the site, making Facebook the biggest photo site on the Web, according to some measures. The pictures tend to be less racy than those on MySpace, but Ivy League co-eds aren't above posting pictures of themselves in their bras. (Nudity is forbidden.) Another recent addition, Pulse, generates top-ten lists of bands and books based on preferences in member profiles.

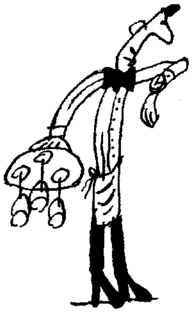
Two-thirds of Facebook members log on at least once every twenty-four hours, and the typical user spends twenty minutes a day on the site. This is an average figure: some students log on to Facebook rarely; some use it obsessively. One female student e-mailed the site: "I HATE YOU, FACEBOOK. I CAN'T QUIT."

According to Metcalfe's law, which was formulated by Robert Metcalfe, the computer scientist who founded 3Com, the usefulness of a network (the value it provides in terms of facilitating communication) increases in proportion to the square of the number of nodes (or people) attached to it: a network of twenty people is not just twice as useful as a network of ten; it is four times as useful. Under Metcalfe's law, Facebook is vastly less useful than MySpace. But Zuckerberg argues that on social-networking sites it isn't the size of the over-all network that matters but the way people organize themselves into subnetworks and exchange information within those subnetworks. "If your site is open, and you let everyone read everything, then the stuff they put up is going to be less personal," he said. "The stuff that people want to share with just their friends is the most important stuff: photo albums that you only want your friends to see, contact information, that kind of thing."

Suppose, he went on, that 1,300 of Harvard's approximately 6,500 undergraduates post a new piece of information on their profiles—an e-mail address, say—and this information is made available to everyone at the school. The number of opportunities for people at Harvard to access the new information is 1,300 multiplied by 6,500, which yields more than eight million. But most students aren't interested in the addresses of people they don't know, and won't bother looking at the new information. Now assume that 2,600 Harvard students post their e-mail addresses on Facebook, but each allows just a hundred friends to see it. The number of opportunities to access new information is 2,600 multiplied by a hundred, which is 260,000—far fewer than eight million. However, since all involved are friends, more addresses might end up being exchanged. "It's a much smaller number of people getting the information, but it's more valuable," Zuckerberg said. "The information is going to the right people. So giving people control over who sees what helps to increase over-all information flow."

Facebook's members invariably cite its usefulness for keeping up with friends, but clearly one of the reasons that the site is so popular is that it enables users to forgo the exertion that real relationships entail. "It's a way of maintaining a friendship without having to make any effort whatsoever," a recent Harvard graduate who uses Facebook to stay in touch with her classmates wrote to me recently. "And the interface provides all the information you need to do that: birthdays, pictures, message boards, contact info, etc."

With its emphasis on user-generated content, the site is part of a larger online phenomenon that goes under various names, including "peer production," "Web 2.0," "micro media," and, most tellingly, "Me Media." "On Facebook, you get to fashion yourself in a new way in a new space," said Chris Hughes, who was described on the site as the company's "empath," when I spoke with him at the Facebook offices. "It's not about changing who you are. It's about emphasizing different aspects of your personality."



According to a recent study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, eighty-seven per cent of Americans between twelve and seventeen years old are online, and more than half of them have created some form of digital content and uploaded it to the Internet: a home page, a blog, a photo album, or a video clip. "The Internet generation has grown up, and there are just a lot more people who are comfortable putting their lives online, conversing on the Internet, and writing blogs," Chris DeWolfe, one of the founders of MySpace, told me. "This generation grew up with Napster and the iPod. We are just trying to exploit those macro trends."

The eagerness to parade in public on the Internet still surprises many people. Duncan Watts, a sociologist at Columbia who has been studying social networks for a decade, says that the growth of sites like Facebook and MySpace reflects a dramatic shift in how young people view the Internet. "Now everyone is used to the idea that we are connected, and that's not so interesting," he told me. "If I had to guess why sites like Facebook are so popular, I would say it doesn't have anything to do with networking at all. It's voyeurism and exhibitionism. People like to express themselves, and they are curious about other people."

Watts later e-mailed me to say that he had concluded that the best analogy for sites like MySpace and Facebook was hanging out at the mall or lounging on the quad. "Like cruising around on Facebook/MySpace, there's a certain lack of purpose to just hanging out in public, and it's hard to justify if you don't have a lot of free time," Watts wrote. "But it serves the essential purpose (for young people without jobs, families, and other social responsibilities) of seeing and being seen. You're with your friends, but you're also creating the possibility that you'll bump into someone else, in which case you might meet them, or at least be noticed by them. So it's not about networking (which is more instrumental), or even about dating (which is far more specific), so much as it is about just mingling. That's not to say it isn't a powerful idea. Given the apparently timeless appeal to young people of just 'hanging out' . . . that might be all the business model you need."

Ultimately, though, the success of sites like MySpace and Facebook may have less to do with the opportunities they provide for self-expression than with peer pressure. Once Facebook is available, many students feel compelled to join simply because everybody else is using it. "I tried to hold out and go against the flow," Cal Nannes, a junior at Davidson College, in North Carolina, said. “But so many of my friends were members that I finally gave in.” Many Facebook users also admit that they tailor their profiles to win the approval of their peers. “I want to seem self-aware, but not a pretentious asshole,” Matt Morello, a Yale graduate who logs on to Facebook about a dozen times a day, wrote in an e-mail. He described how simply listing his favorite music became an agonizing task: “I never used to update this, thinking it was just too fraught a category (like Favorite Books still is, unless there’s some joke to make). I’m a musician: what I play and listen to has always been an important part of my identity, and it’s only fairly recently that I’ve developed the confidence to say, you know, I like this, and I don’t really care if you don’t. So what’s there now? Albums by Babyshambles, Lady Sovereign, Marxy, and My Bloody Valentine, respectively an indie rock thing, a grime thing, a twenty-minute album released on my friend’s record label that’s brilliant and heard by practically no one, and a canonic album from the late 80s.”

WHAT A TIME SHE HAD!

How did that story go?
As a rule she wouldn’t have remembered so quickly.
No vineyard could grow in that soil.
A citrus grove stood there,
sickly,
stunted.
A single walnut tree that bloomed and bore no fruit,
as if some essential life-giving element
were lacking in the soil.
Hard green lemons.
A balding patch of lawn.
A great tranquillity.
On the western side, the hedge went wild
and there was a honeysucker, of course
(today we’d call it a hummingbird)—
if he were still alive
he’d be twenty years old.

In the Jordan Valley they were hunting down
human beings.
Fire in the thicket.

In the photograph that accompanies Morello’s profile, he appears with his eyes closed and his mouth stuffed with cookies. “I think it’s something of an achievement to fit six Oreos in one’s mouth, and, more to the point, it relieves me of having to put up a picture with which I’m actually trying to convince people that I look good,” he explained. “In short, I wouldn’t put anything up that I wouldn’t want everyone to see, and I want certain people to get much more out of it than others, and for those certains to be impressed by my cleverness tempered by restraint.”

Facebook’s founders understand the site’s power to confer social standing. “If you don’t have a Facebook profile, you don’t have an online identity,” Chris Hughes said to me. “It doesn’t mean that you are antisocial, or you are a bad person, but where are the traces of your existence in this college community? You don’t exist—online, at least. That’s why we get so many people to join up. You need to be on it.”

Online communities have existed since the dawn of the Internet era, and so has the desire to make them profitable. After Netscape went public, and surfing the Web became easy, a number of companies emerged to help people build Web pages, where they could post pictures and text. One of the first was theglobe.com, which two Cornell undergraduates, Stephen Paternot and Todd Krizelman, started in their dorm room in 1994. Within a year, theglobe.com had roughly two hundred and fifty thousand registered users, and it was generating about fourteen million page views a month. Using the slogan “A Whole New Life Awaits You,” the site advertised on MTV and on the sides of buses. In contrast to other home-page companies, such as GeoCities, theglobe.com encouraged its users to send messages to one another. “Our philosophy was more about people interacting with other people,” Paternot wrote in his 2001 memoir, “A Very Public Offering.” “Very quickly, everyone started using the term community. Everyone jumped on the bandwagon. Everyone became community.”

On November 13, 1998, theglobe.com issued three million shares through the investment bank Bear Stearns, at a price of nine dollars each. By the end of the first day of trading, the stock price had jumped to $63.50. On paper, at least, Paternot and Krizelman were worth more than sixty million dollars each. Less than two years later, theglobe.com’s stock was trading at two dollars, and Paternot stepped down as co-chief executive.

Things are different this time, people in Silicon Valley and on Wall Street claim. In the nineties, Internet firms couldn’t sell enough ads to cover their costs. But the combination of broadband, rich digital media, better search technology, and more users has transformed Internet advertising. Eighteen months ago, the going rate for a banner ad on social-networking sites was pennies per thousand page viewings. Today the rate on MySpace is about ten cents, and Facebook, with its upscale demographic and unobjectionable content, can charge more—as much as four dollars per thousand page views. “What was clear all along was that Facebook had captured the attention and enthusiasm of the upper end of the socio-economic spectrum of the eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old age group,” Matt Cohler, who is now Facebook’s vice-president for strategy and business operations, said over lunch in a restaurant on University Avenue. “That is a lucrative market for

Summer's hellfire blazing as usual.
Evening mowing down shadows, merciless.
They sang her the Songs of Zion
between one death and the next.
She wouldn't lay her head down
before the first light of day,
the first birdcall.
She herself died three or four times
in the course of those years.
Not an absolute and lasting death
but a kind of death agony.
A great yearning took hold of her in the lap of night,
powerful soulquakes.

The years have a way of bringing about changes,
mysterious, cryptic.
She had no trouble remembering that story.
What a time she had!
Too bad that, so close to the ending,
she suddenly lost the ability
to stay alive.

—*Dahlia Ravikovitch*

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld.*)

advertisers, and a very difficult-to-reach market. In the next thirty days, we'll do about ten billion page views. That's a pretty astonishing number. It would not be difficult to just sell a bunch of ads and make a bunch of money quickly, but that is not how we look at it."

Facebook doesn't allow pop-up ads, and its banner ads are relatively unobtrusive. The company claims that the ads are particularly effective because it uses information in members' profiles to serve them with ads related to their interests. "If you say you are a U2 fan, you might find an ad for the new album in your profile," Chris Kelly, Facebook's chief privacy officer and director of corporate development, told me. Facebook also allows advertisers to sponsor user groups, such as the Nike group, the Abercrombie & Fitch group, and the Apple group, where members can discuss a company's products. Some of these groups are surprisingly popular with students, who evidently are less suspicious of American corporations than were previous generations of college kids. "At Harvard, there's a group called Not a Corporate Whore," Chris Hughes told me, "but a lot of those people are also in the Apple group."

In April, 2005, when Accel Partners invested in Facebook, the company was valued at about a hundred million dollars, a figure some media experts considered excessive. Today it could be sold for a lot more than that. During the past year or so, Zuckerberg has received half a dozen offers for Facebook, all of which he has turned down. At the end of March, *Business Week* published an article on its Web site claiming that Facebook's owners had put the site up for sale and hoped to receive as much as two billion dollars. Facebook denied the story, and Zuckerberg told me that he wasn't interested in selling. "I'm not bored yet," he said. Last month, Facebook announced that it had secured another twenty-five million dollars in funding from a group of venture capitalists, including Greylock Partners, Meritech Capital Partners, Accel Partners, and Peter Thiel.

The deal put a valuation on Facebook of about five hundred million dollars, and Jim Breyer told me that he believes it can eventually become a billion-dollar business. "It cannot be bracketed: that is its power," he said. "When I sit down with Donald Graham"—the chairman of the Washington Post Company—"as I did recently, he thinks of Facebook as a next-generation media business. When I sit down in Arkansas with Wal-Mart executives and show them Facebook, they think of it as a phenomenal e-commerce opportunity. And when I sit down with people from Apple Computer and RealNetworks they think of it as an entertainment site."

Breyer said that Facebook hopes eventually to become a public company. A successful initial public offering would allow the firm to repay its financial backers; Zuckerberg could retain control of the firm, just as Bill Gates retains control of Microsoft. Still, remaining an independent company in the hope of eventually doing an I.P.O. is far riskier than selling to Viacom or Google, both of which are rumored to be interested. Young Internet users are notoriously fickle. In 2003, Friendster, which is aimed at educated twenty-somethings, was the most popular social-networking site. Today, it gets less than a tenth of the traffic that MySpace gets, while new sites like YouTube, which allows users to share videos, are showing astonishing growth.

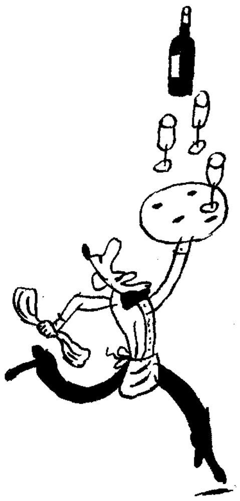
In order to sell stock to the public, Facebook will have to demonstrate that it can continue to grow. This may be difficult, because its core market appears to be approaching saturation, at least in the United States. In March, according to comScore Media Metrix, the site had 12.9 million unique visitors, only slightly more than the 12.4 million visitors it had in December, 2005. During the same period, MySpace's audience grew from about forty million to sixty million. Melanie Deitch, Facebook's marketing director, acknowledged a slowdown, but described it as temporary. "Even though we have one hundred per cent of the four-year colleges and universities, we don't even come close to capturing all of the junior colleges and community colleges," Deitch said.

In the past six months, Facebook has expanded into high schools, where it is competing with MySpace. So far, only about a million high-school students have signed up. "High school in no way has been an initial failure, but it has not been the resounding success that perhaps it could have been," Jim Breyer acknowledged. Verifying that high-school users are at least thirteen (the minimum age for a Facebook user) has been difficult. Since not many high schools give their students e-mail addresses, Facebook has had to rely mainly on tip-offs from users. At some schools, there have been instances of students setting up hate groups targeting individual teachers or pupils. "There is no doubt about it," Breyer said. "The high-school experience is fundamentally different from the college experience."

In February, Facebook merged its high-school and college networks, allowing all its users to send friend requests back and forth and, subsequently, to view one another's profiles. Older users immediately objected. At Harvard, some students started a group called Advocates for the Return of Facebook to College-Only Exclusivity. At Cornell, Lindy Robinson, a freshman, created a group called You're Still in High School and You're Friending Me? That's Awkward…Now Go Away. On the group's home page, Robinson wrote: "Do you still have a curfew? Go to school dances which end at 10pm and are located in the gym? Have your mom call you in sick? Sneak alcohol from your parents' liquor cabinet? Oh…that's funny…we don't. Yeah, we're in college, and we earned facebook. We stood by, looking the other way, as facebook for high schools was created. But no longer. Now that you can friend us, we cannot ignore this mockery of facebook."

The backlash against high-school users is part of a larger problem. To compete with MySpace, Zuckerberg has been forced to make his site more open by removing some of the walls between users. But to do so undercuts his founding philosophy and, in the view of some of Facebook's members, its distinctive appeal: guaranteeing members privacy and control over the information they post. Consider Facebook's photo application. With just a few clicks, a user can post a picture of a group of friends at a party, say, and "tag" the image with their names for others to see. If a Facebook member in the picture objects, he can remove the link to his profile, but he can't get the picture taken down.

"By launching the photo feature and creating the system of easy linkages and tagging, you guys have dramatically changed social interactions," one former Harvard student wrote in an e-mail to Chris Hughes. "Some people envision an upcoming era of 'no camera' policies at parties and a growing sense of paranoia among college students worried that all their actions on Friday night appear online just hours later, accessible to hundreds or thousands of users (e.g., I can see Betty getting wasted at the Pudding even if I can't access Betty's profile). A single user with low privacy restrictions 'overcomes/ruins' all the protective and restrictive steps taken by peers."



Facebook users aren't the only ones who question Zuckerberg's commitment to protecting people's private information. In a lawsuit filed in a Massachusetts federal court in September, 2004, the three founders of HarvardConnection, which is now called ConnectU, allege that Zuckerberg stole their idea and connived to delay the site's launch so that he could complete Facebook first. Zuckerberg denies any wrongdoing, and in November, 2004, Facebook filed a countersuit, charging ConnectU with defamation. The case could go to trial next year.

Both sides agree on some facts, including that in November, 2003, Zuckerberg agreed to work on ConnectU. He says that the programming he was asked to do was more complicated than he had expected, and that he got caught up in academic work. ConnectU's founders, the Winklevoss brothers and Divya Narendra, claim that Zuckerberg deliberately procrastinated. To support their case, they showed me a series of e-mails that they have filed with the court.

On December 4th, in a message to Cameron Winklevoss, Zuckerberg wrote, "Sorry I was unreachable tonight. I just got about three of your missed calls. I was working on a problem set." Thirteen days later, he wrote again: "Sorry I have not been reachable for the past few days. I've basically been in the lab the whole time working on a cs problem set which I'm still not finished with." Then, on January 8, 2004, he wrote, "I'm completely swamped with work this week. I have three programming projects and a final paper due by Monday, as well as a couple of problem sets due Friday."

On January 14th, the Winklevosses and Narendra met with Zuckerberg to discuss the delays. According to Tyler Winklevoss, Zuckerberg mentioned that he had been busy with other projects, which he did not identify. Three days earlier, however, Zuckerberg had registered the domain name Thefacebook.com. "He didn't mention it at all," Tyler Winklevoss told me. "He didn't say he was working on anything similar to our site. It just seems like the way he acted was very duplicitous." It wasn't until February 9th that ConnectU's founders learned about Facebook by reading the article in the *Crimson*.

ConnectU eventually launched, in May, 2004, and shares many of Facebook's features: profiles, messaging, and groups. Today, however, it has only about half a million users at more than five hundred colleges, making it about a fifteenth the size of Facebook. In the lawsuit, ConnectU made nine claims against Zuckerberg, including copyright infringement, misappropriation of trade secrets, and breach of contract. "He said he was working for us; he led us on; he took unfair advantage of us," Tyler Winklevoss said. "He's just not a fully formed individual, from an ethical standpoint. He's an egomaniac. He just couldn't stand not being the guy who launched the site."

When I asked Zuckerberg about the charges, he said, "I don't really spend much time worrying about this. There is a lawsuit going on, but, like, we know that we didn't take anything from them. There is really good documentation of this: our code base versus theirs. At some point, that will come out in court, and they'll compare the two."

In public statements and in court, Facebook has pointed out that Zuckerberg didn't have a contract with ConnectU, and that he wasn't paid for the work he did. "An oral contract is just as sacred as a written contract," Tyler Winklevoss said. "It is sometimes more difficult to prove its existence, but there is an extensive written record: fifty-two e-mails between us and Mark. I believe the jury will look at them and say an oral contract existed." When Tyler Winklevoss read that Facebook was for sale, he was elated. "This asset is now incredibly valuable, and I'm not going to pretend that's not very exciting," he said. "I don't want more than I deserve, but I want what I deserve."

In mid-March, Zuckerberg went to La Costa, a resort just north of San Diego, to attend PC Forum, an annual conference for computer-industry executives, entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists. "We are going to hear about reputation and trust," Zuckerberg said to me on his way into a session called Me Media. "It's going to be sweet." Facebook was hardly mentioned, however; the founders of YouTube, Chad Hurley and Steve Chen, were in the audience, and attendees besieged them with questions about online videos. Zuckerberg sat quietly at the back of the room. After the session ended, I sat with him on a veranda and asked him whether Facebook would eventually allow its users to post videos on their profiles. "It's not a huge priority at the moment, but I wouldn't say we would never do it," he replied.

Facebook has introduced a new feature that allows users to create a second profile that omits some of the content of their original one. "Would you prefer that your vegan friends don't see the photo of you eating that giant steak?" a description on the site read. "You can establish a Limited Profile that will create a limited view of your Facebook profile for selected people. These individuals will not be informed that they are not able to see certain profile features." The introduction of limited profiles was clearly intended to address concerns about the erosion of privacy on the site. Nevertheless, the controversial photo-tagging system hasn't been changed, and Facebook recently added a search box that allows users to call up members' names from anywhere on the site and contact them—a feature that it shares with MySpace and Xanga, a site specializing in online diaries. Still, Zuckerberg insisted that he hasn't compromised his original vision. "I think that where we come out is that you always want to give people control of anything," he said.

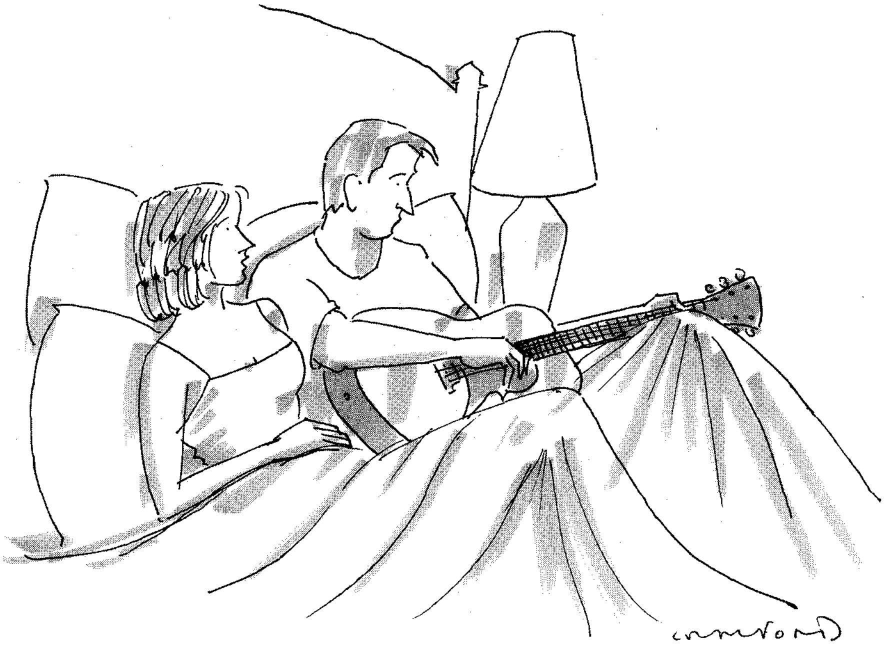
At PC Forum, Zuckerberg was more eager to talk about Facebook's prospects for growth. He cited a deal the company recently made with Cingular, Sprint, and Verizon, which allows users to access the site from their cell phones. Last month, Facebook took a radical step by allowing adults to sign up for the site using their work e-mail addresses—a move apparently aimed at creating workplace networks based on the campus model. "Everybody asks us how we are going to grow," Melanie Deitch said to me. "This answers that question."

At the Forum's closing dinner, Zuckerberg appeared on a panel, alongside Reid Hoffman, the chief executive of LinkedIn, a networking site for businesspeople, and Helen Cheng, a young Stanford graduate who is an expert in online games. Esther Dyson, the impresario behind PC Forum, introduced Zuckerberg as "the technology entrepreneur of the year," which prompted the investor sitting next to me to whisper, "I hear that he was offered seven hundred and fifty million dollars by News Corporation, and he turned it down."

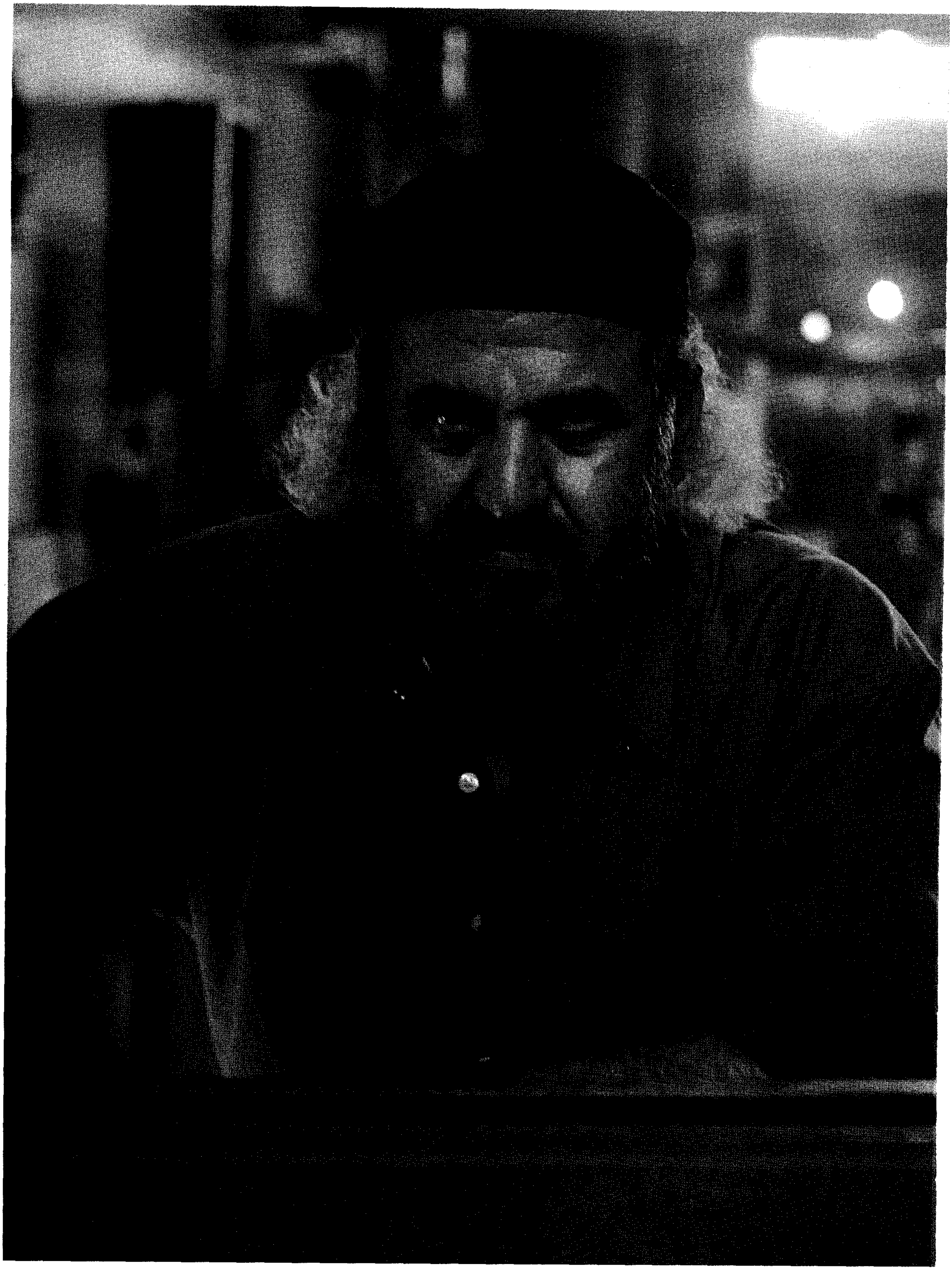
"What are we missing, us old guys?" Dyson asked the panel.

"I think that understanding that there might not be any difference between what people are doing online and offline is something really important," Zuckerberg said firmly. "People are online because it is a more efficient way of doing things." A man in the audience asked Zuckerberg about some pictures of students drinking at an East Coast college, which, he claimed, had appeared on Facebook and had led to the expulsion of several students. "First of all, it's pretty stupid if you put up pictures of you doing drugs on Facebook," Zuckerberg said. "I think that that's just sort of the deviant behavior on the very far end of the distribution. . . . I bet that those kids do not post pictures of them doing drugs on Facebook anymore." He went on, "Obviously that's a pretty shitty way to learn that, like, you're not supposed to post pictures like that on Facebook, but, I mean, the fact that everyone here hears this and is kind of shocked means that more than just those few people learn from that mistake, right? And the system is going to reach an equilibrium that makes sense."

After an awkward silence, two other panelists spoke. Then Daphne Kis, Esther Dyson's business partner, stood up to defend Zuckerberg. She described Facebook's privacy features, arguing that they distinguished the site from MySpace, and added that she was comfortable allowing her teen-age daughter to use Facebook. Then she turned to Zuckerberg and said, "Is that right?" Zuckerberg looked at Kis for a few moments. Finally, he said, "Sure." Laughter broke out around the room. "That was a very child-to-parent answer," Kis said. ♦



"How many verses of 'Froggie Went A-Courting' are there, Jay, before your pill kicks in?"



POLARIS

The director Ossama Mohammed says, "In Syria, what we keep inside our imagination—what we don't tell—that is the main reality.

'hotograph by Kate Brooks.

LETTER FROM DAMASCUS

CAPTURED ON FILM

Can dissident filmmakers effect change in Syria?

BY LAWRENCE WRIGHT

"On the one side, it's a tragedy that I have made only two feature films in thirty years," the Syrian director Ossama Mohammed told me last month. "Yet, from the other side, I see it as a miracle." We were sitting in the Rawda Café, the center of the modest intellectual life of Damascus, where television stars, screenwriters, and poets gather for leisurely mid-morning chats. The clatter of backgammon boards and the smell of apple-flavored tobacco from *sheesha* pipes filled the room. A man in a black jacket at the next table, who appeared to be reading a magazine, occasionally leaned toward our conversation.

"In Syria, we have this huge army of secret police and a complete absence of legal protections," Mohammed said, in a quiet, angry voice. "You can go to jail for thirty-five years and nobody will ask about you." He is fifty-two and broad-chested, with an unruly beard and wiry gray hair streaming down his back; his eyes are the same color as his habitual unsmoked cigar. "People here have a sense of the balance of forces," he said. "They realize they are not strong enough to resist." He cautioned, "In Syria, what we keep inside our imagination—what we *don't* tell—that is the main reality."

Nearly every Middle Eastern country is governed by an authoritarian regime, but that hasn't kept many of those countries—notably, Iran and Egypt—from developing surprisingly lively cinematic traditions. In a quarrelsome, voluble region, Syria is a strangely muted place. I wondered if, by examining Syrian movies and talking to Syrian filmmakers, I could glimpse this closely guarded inner world.

Mohammed's films, "Stars in Broad Daylight" (1988) and "Sacrifices" (2002), are merciless indictments of the Baathist dictatorship that has controlled Syria since 1963, when it came to power in a military coup. Both movies have received international acclaim; they were presented at the Cannes Film Festival, and "Stars" won first prize at the Festival of Valencia and at the International Festival of Rabat. This month, they will be shown in America, as part of a retrospective of Syrian cinema, at Lincoln Center. "Stars" explores the toxic effect of totalitarianism on ordinary Syrians, as seen through the internal battles of a dysfunctional family. The oldest of three children works for the phone company, where he casually listens in on telephone calls. Corrupt and brutally insouciant, he forces his siblings to become engaged to people they despise, in order to expand his land holdings. He encourages his brother to savagely beat their sister's suitor, then makes his sister get involved with a member of the regime, who rapes her. Not coincidentally, the actor playing this monstrous character looks like Hafez al-Assad—the man who ruled Syria for nearly thirty years, until his death, in 2000. Funny, violent, and blunt, "Stars" is perhaps the greatest film to come out of Syria. It should have been the début of a director of international stature. Both "Stars" and "Sacrifices" required years of negotiation with government censors, and, in both cases, after Mohammed completed the film, his final cut was rejected, meaning that the film was effectively banned at home.

Although many foreign critics have portrayed Mohammed and other Syrian directors as symbols of artistic victimization, he defiantly rejects that role. "Do you want me to play the hero?" he asked. "Do you want me to repeat two hundred times each day that my films are forbidden? This is my society. I belong to this world. I am *not* a victim."

Yet a look around the Rawda Café suggests that the creative class in Syria has a lot of time on its hands. One writer I met has a job counting the city's street lamps. Most of the country's gime may be the most significant political dialogue in the country today. "I have an obsession with facing authority," Mohammed said. "This society is responsible for creating the dictatorship—it's in our culture, our way of believing and thinking. I am trying to expose the authority inside us and the shadow of political authority in front of our doors."

The Rawda Café is in a neighborhood of dowdy, utilitarian apartments that were built during the nineteen-seventies and eighties, when the stripped-down, socialist model became the architectural aesthetic in many Arab countries. Damascus climbs up Mt. Qassioun, a treeless khaki-colored ridge that overlooks the city. Unlike in most cities with mountain vistas, the higher the neighborhood the poorer the inhabitants. In the evenings, the peasants on the high slope may smoke a *sheesha* in a patch of meadow and look down on the city lights.

A few blocks away from the café is the Syrian Parliament Building, with its requisite portraits of Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar, who has run the country since his father's death. Forty years of Baathist rule has resulted in a near-total elimination of political opposition. In 1980, Hafez began a series of mass arrests, in an attempt to eliminate dissidents. Two years later, he ordered the destruction of Hama, a northern city that was a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood, the insurrectionary Islamist group. As many as twenty-five thousand people were killed, and the city was bulldozed, as a warning to those who might defy his authority. Even now, anyone suspected of belonging to the Brotherhood can be executed without trial.

The Parliament Building is across the street from the Cham Palace, the only movie theatre in the capital that shows current releases. For the past several weeks, "Big Momma's House 2," the Martin Lawrence comedy, has been running. When I went, on a Thursday evening, there was a small audience of families with children. Damascus was once home to dozens of first-run theatres, but, because moviegoing draws people together in a communal experience, the Baathist regime considers it a

"I am a golem, but on weekends I do Domino's."

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filmmakers, including Mohammed, are employees of the National Film Organization, which manages the production of all Syrian films. Mohammed is paid two hundred and fifty dollars a month, which is the average government wage. This salary allows filmmakers to pay their rent and spend much of their day idling at the Rawda, which has the atmosphere of a perpetual, brooding salon. For the past few years, Mohammed told me, he has been adapting "Manifest Illusions," a deeply psychological memoir by Raja al-Taey, a Syrian feminist; but he recently set the project aside. The National Film Organization has a small budget, and produces only one or two movies a year, so there's no rush.

The Syrian government and the filmmakers have developed an odd, uncomfortable dependency upon each other. Ibrahim Hamidi, the Damascus bureau chief for the pan-Arab newspaper *Al Hayat*, which is published in London, says, "By permitting Ossama Mohammed and others to make movies financed by the government, the regime is harming the filmmakers' credibility, and also trying to contain them. The films get awards abroad, which is good P.R. for the regime. At the same time, Syrians aren't allowed to see the movies." While filmmakers have the opportunity to test the limits of government censorship, the regime acquires an intimate sense of the mood of the nation's intellectuals. "The people who rule Syria are not stupid," Hamidi said. "They play a very sophisticated game."

Nevertheless, the interchange between the filmmakers and the Assad re-dangerous habit. Starting in the nineteen-eighties, Party thugs began disrupting film audiences; at the same time, the selection of movies officially offered became smaller and smaller, and the theatres, which were forbidden to raise ticket prices, deteriorated. "Two decades ago, there were a hundred and twenty cinemas in Syria," one filmmaker told me. "Now there are only six that are functioning." As the country's cinemas fell into ruin, Syrians increasingly stayed indoors.

Ossama Mohammed fondly recalls the time when Syrians went to the movies regularly. One of nine children, he grew up in Latakia, a town on the Mediterranean coast. "Before 1963, people could see films the same year they were produced," he said. When "Spartacus," the 1960 Kubrick classic, came to town, he said, "I didn't have money to go to the cinema, so I would steal from my brother Ali and invite my friends. Ali discovered this, and he brought a big stick and said, 'For every franc you steal, I will beat you once.' I thought about it, and the next day I stole three francs. It was worth it!"

Mohammed's father was a teacher at an elementary school where corporal punishment was commonplace. "But I am proud that my father didn't do that once," he said. "At school, I was punished hundreds of times. Once, I warned a teacher who was going to beat me. I was used to fighting on the streets. I said, 'If you strike me, I will hit you back.' He didn't believe me. So I beat him up. I was sixteen."

Thrown out of Latakia's schools, Mohammed moved to Damascus to finish high school. The following year, one of his sisters, a doctor, called with some good news. She had saved the life of a government official who was in charge of giving foreign-study scholarships to Syrian students. "Do you want to study in Russia?" she asked Mohammed.

"Study what?"

"Medicine," she proposed.

"No."

"Engineering?"

"No."

"Film?"

Mohammed remembered "Spartacus," and agreed. In 1974, he enrolled at the renowned Russian State Institute of Cinematography, or V.G.I.K., which had produced many masters of cinema, including Andrei Tarkovsky and Vasily Shukshin. In Moscow, Mohammed met another Syrian, Mohammed Malas, who was in his final year at V.G.I.K., and Malas introduced him to his mentor, Igor Talankin, who accepted Mohammed as a protégé.

A third Syrian, Abdullatif Abdulhamid, arrived in Moscow in 1975. He was the son of a military officer in the Golan Heights. Once a month, a film—usually Egyptian or Lebanese—was shown in the main square of the little town where he lived. The screen was propped up on a car beside the square, and the dialogue could barely be heard over the roar of a generator. Despite the primitive conditions, Abdulhamid became captivated by the world of cinema. "For a month, I used to imitate all the sounds of the movie, until the next one appeared," he told me.

Upon returning home from Russia, the three Syrians attempted to create an indigenous cinema. In 1974, Malas, along with Omar Amiralay, another young filmmaker, founded the Damascus Cinema Club. Amiralay, who became an accomplished documentarian, had already angered the regime by depicting the despair of rural peasants in "Everyday Life in a Syrian Village," a documentary, released that year, that sharply undercut the government's boasts about agrarian reform. The film was banned. Three years later, Amiralay made "The Chickens," a critical look at the government's clumsy efforts to stimulate private industry. He focussed on a village where the peasants put everything they owned into the poultry business, even turning their houses into chicken coops. A plague among the chickens forced the villagers into bankruptcy, but they continued to pursue their ill-advised investment. At the end of the film, the clucking of chickens drowns out the speech of the village's doomed capitalists.

Amiralay said of the cinema club, "We showed the kind of films we dreamed of making." Using projectors borrowed from the Soviet cultural center, the club members set up a screening room in the ground floor of an apartment building. The room, which faced a garden, was too cramped for the film to be projected in front of the screen. So they turned to Nazih Shahbandar, an elderly man who had pioneered movie projection in Syria by making all the equipment himself. Shahbandar set up the projector in an adjoining kitchen and projected the image onto a mirror in the garden, which reflected it onto the rear of the screen. In that manner, the cinema club presented the works of Bergman, Fellini, and Godard. It showed few Syrian films. "Third World film in general is very poor, with the notable exception of India in the fifties and sixties, especially the movies of Satyajit Ray," Amiralay said. "He made from the tragedy of his country a noble artistic cinema."

The screenings were followed by impassioned debates, which provided a safe way to discuss the filmmakers' larger predicament. Club members held screenwriting seminars and technical workshops, and published a magazine, *Film.* The French comic actor and director Jacques Tati visited the club, and the Italian writer and director Pier Paolo Pasolini came to speak when he was shooting "Medea" in Aleppo. In 1978, in conjunction with the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma,* the club sponsored two weeks of "cinema and politics." There were two screenings a day in a seven-hundred-seat theatre rented for the occasion. "We sold out every performance," Amiralay recalled. The critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma* had chosen eighteen films, but the Syrian government banned more than half of them. Instead, the French critic Serge Daney sat on the stage and narrated detailed descriptions of them. "It was a screening without an image—an absolutely beautiful happening," Amiralay said.

The Assad government's huge crackdown began two years later. Hundreds of dissidents were imprisoned and tortured. Amiralay discovered that his name was on a list of people to be arrested, and he moved to France. Most of the filmmakers who worked for the government, however, stayed and tried to practice their craft in a society that was cowed and broken.

Fares Helou is one of Syria's biggest movie and television stars. He is a burly man with tightly curled hair and a heavy, expressive face. Helou, who is forty-five, is also known for declaring his negative views of the regime, and he has continued to do so even in the face of a new wave of arrests which began last fall. "I'm loved as an actor, so I'm protected," he said one afternoon at the Rawda Café. Indeed, as we talked, fans approached him for autographs and snapshots. But his friends worry that Helou's career has been damaged by his political stance. "His star-o-meter is going down," one of them told me. "People are afraid to work with him. Maybe he's not as protected as he thinks he is."

Helou fell in love with cinema while studying at Syria's Higher Institute of Theatre; soon after graduating, he got a role in Mohammed Malas's second feature film, "The Night" (1993). Subsequent television roles have made him known throughout the Arab world. (Syrian miniseries are ubiquitous on Arab satellite television.) I asked him if things had changed in Syria since the ascent to power of Bashar al-Assad, who has presented himself to the West as a reformer. "We had the same amount of freedom, or more, in Hafez's time," Helou said. "Hafez, at least, was clear—with any position, you knew exactly the space that was allowed. But after the son came in the freedom given us was not real; it was a trap. When voices started to be heard presenting new and modern ideas, the regime arrested those voices." On March 8th, the annual celebration of the Baath military coup, about a hundred and fifty demonstrators gathered peacefully in front of the Ministry of Justice. Hundreds of Baathist college students, members of a paramilitary brigade, attacked the demonstration, beating the protesters indiscriminately. While the police stood aside and watched, a well-known female novelist, Samar Yazbek, was bludgeoned.

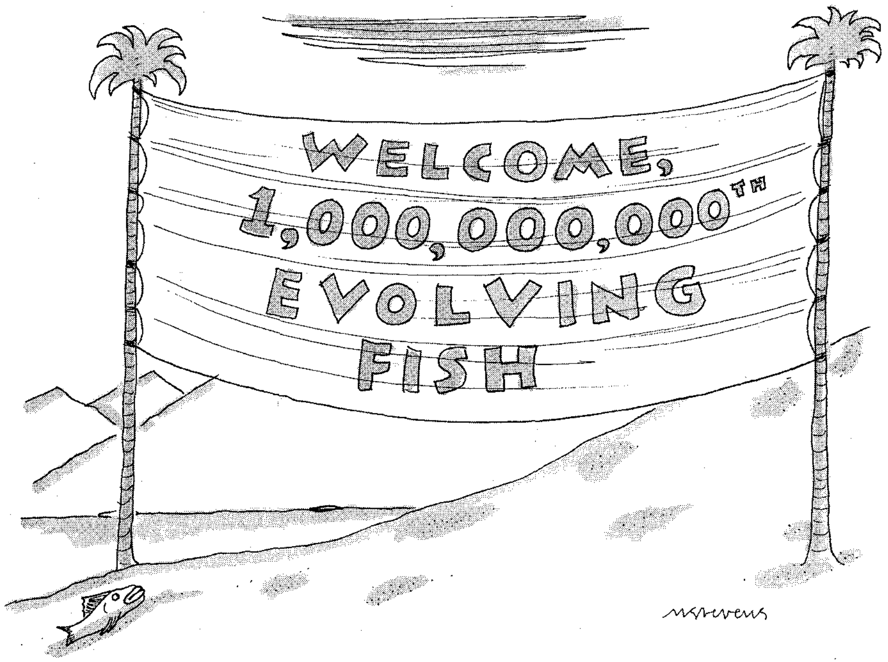
As Helou and I were talking, a young fan in a jean jacket and a checked shirt approached the table. "I love you," he said to Helou, in Arabic. "I just want to exchange mobile numbers. I promise I won't abuse it."

To my surprise, Helou offered his number. "What's your name?" he asked the fan.

"My friends call me Stalin," he said. "Because I'm a killer." Stalin had broad shoulders, a long, unbroken eyebrow that stretched across his forehead, and a gold chain around his neck.

Helou gave a dismissive nod.

I asked him about Ossama Mohammed's second film, "Sacrifices." Helou plays a father who leaves Syria to fight in the 1973 war against Israel. When he returns home to his family, on a remote mountaintop, he is caked with mud. In a savagely ironic scene, he gathers the family to tell his story. The women are beating cotton bolls on the table, and a cow stands at the front door. Helou's character explains that he was nearly killed when he was buried by an explosion for three days. It took that long for his fellow-Arabs to get a bulldozer to dig him out. "There was no fuel left, it seems," the character says bitterly. Where was the Arabs' oil when it was needed? he wonders. He then pulls the male children aside and forces them to drink oil—ostensibly to toughen them up.



Helou said of his character, "The shock of being defeated makes him cruel. Embracing the illusion of authority makes him think he was victorious." But, as the film shows, the only legacy of violence is more violence. Helou's character eventually abuses power in the same way as the corrupt and incompetent state that sent him into the disastrous war.

Stalin suddenly returned to our table. "I have another phone," he said, pulling it out of a black leather bag strapped around his waist. "I want to give you the number. Very few people have this. I even take it with me on operations." He was making it clear that he was with the secret police.

"Is this the first time you've been here?" Helou asked him.

"No, I'm *always* here," Stalin said. "We have spoken before. Usually, I'm dressed in a military uniform, so perhaps you don't recognize me."

Stalin asked if Helou was a member of the Baath Party. Helou said he was not.

"You cannot *not* be a member," Stalin said angrily, grabbing Helou's hand. "This is a real Baathist handshake! I will pay your dues for you!"

Stalin noticed that I was taking notes on his conversation, and he denounced American and British aggression in Iraq, and the interference of human-rights activists in Syrian affairs. "We should be able to discipline the peasants without outside interference," he said. "I quote Aristotle to his student, Alexander the Great, who said that you should treat the Greek people as gentlemen and the people of the East as slaves."

Stalin left, and I asked Helou about

the baffling mixture of fan worship, academic pretense, and veiled threats. "He came to deliver a message," Helou said. "He's telling me to take it easy—to calm down." His left leg was jiggling furiously.

Minutes later, Stalin returned again, this time carrying a cup of coffee and a pack of Gitanes. He obviously intended to disrupt the interview. Bizarrely, he pulled yet another telephone from a jacket pocket. "This is my most private number," he said to Helou. He pointed to an arrow on the phone's screen, beside Helou's mobile number. "This arrow goes *through* you," he said, laughing. He squeezed in next to Helou, who had become quiet.

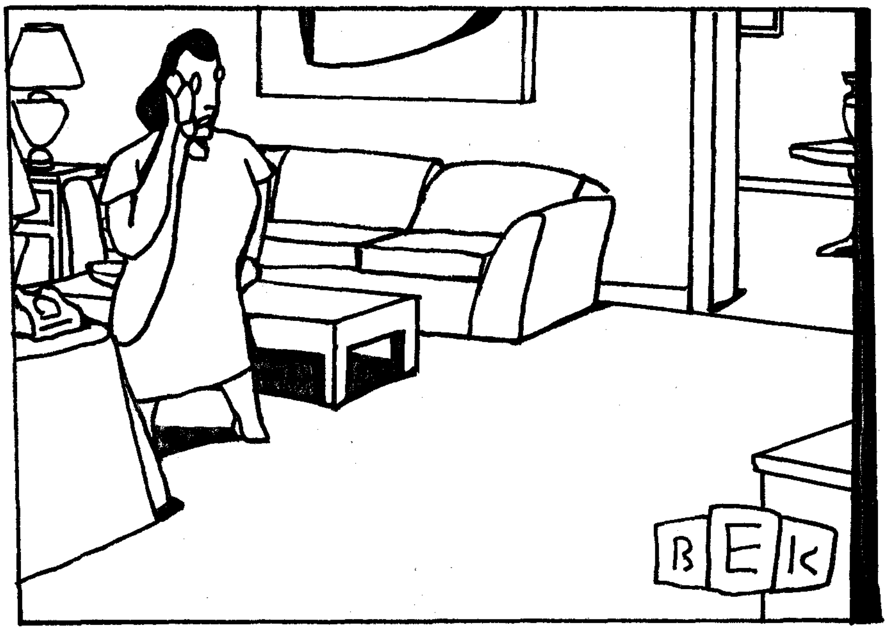
"Do you work for the government?" I asked Stalin.

"Of course—that's why I'm talking to you," he said, switching to English. He added that he was also a journalist for a pro-government magazine and that he loved movies—"*Syrian* movies," he said. "I love the movies that are produced by the National Film Organization and the movies made by this man, regardless of the fact that he is not obedient."

Stalin took Helou's hand once more. "I feel the need to beat someone," he said, laughing into Helou's shoulder. "May I beat you?"

I could see that Helou was ready to get out of there. "Welcome to Syria," Stalin said as we left.

"Syria is a dictatorship, but it would be a mistake to understand us as a totalitarian society," Omar Amiralay, the documentarian, explained. "For instance, the National Film Organization has made forty-five features, but there is not one propaganda film in the modest history of Syrian cinema." It's true that Syrian films tend to be critical of the regime, but the nature of the protest is often indirect, like the projection system of the Damascus Cinema Club. I thought about Mohammed Malas's mournful "Dreams of the City" (1983), in which a young boy whose father has just died searches for a role model in his Damascus neighborhood but finds only corruption; and Abdullatif Abdulhamid's "Nights of the Jackals" (1989), an angry account of the death of traditional rural life. These films show a society that is, in Amiralay's words, "completely ruined."



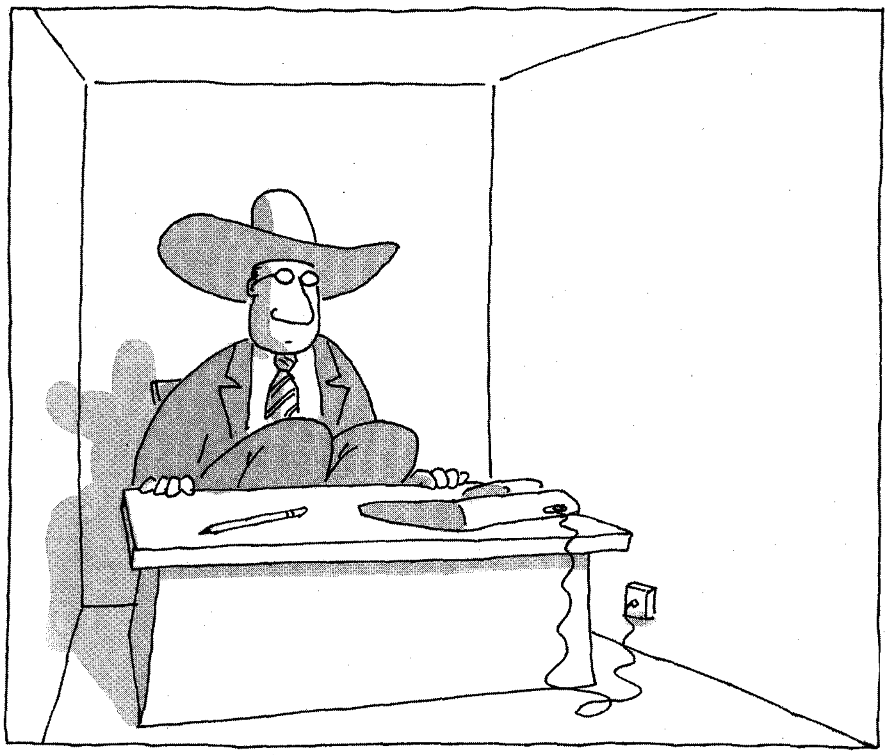
"He's in the other room, grumbling about the culture."

The most brazenly subversive film that the National Film Organization has produced is "Stars in Broad Daylight," Mohammed's 1988 dark comedy about the family autocrat. I asked Mohammed how the movie came to be made. "Dictatorship is not like this monolith where everyone is the same," he explained. "No. Inside, you find a lot of people want to support you. 'Stars' wouldn't exist without three or four Syrian cinematographers who read the script on behalf of the National Film Organization." At the time, the government wanted to film an innocuous script by a different director, but the cinematographers had repeatedly rejected it. Finally, they made a deal, Mohammed recalled. "They said, 'We will give you this film if you give us 'Stars.' "

While Mohammed was working on the script, his brother Ali, an electrical engineer, was imprisoned, after government officials tricked him by inviting him and several university professors to share their views on reform. According to Mohammed, the authorities threatened to send Ali from a prison in Damascus to one in Palmyra, which has a reputation as a torture chamber, if Mohammed did not tone down his script. Mohammed refused to make any changes. "My relationship with my brother is like this: To salute him, I will make *my* movie. That is how I support him!" Ali was released after four and a half years, just before Mohammed began shooting.

During the filming, crew members began to get scared. "The game was to make love with the fear," Mohammed said. "It was 'Yes, let's put Hafez al-Assad *inside* my movie.' " He cast his Moscow schoolmate Abdullatif Abdulhamid in the lead role, largely because of his unmistakable resemblance to Assad. In a satirical sequence that pointedly conjures both the secret police and Marlon Brando in "The Wild One," the Assad figure and his brothers, wearing aviator sunglasses, ride through town on motorcycles. The vicious protagonist also reminded me of Stalin, the man in the café. Before I went to Damascus, the relationships of the characters in Syrian films had seemed to me full of unmotivated cruelty, but now they were beginning to make sense.

I asked Mohammed how he got away with making such a defiant film. "When you live in a garden of corruption, you learn the skills of bluffing," he said. "Some of my colleagues came and said, 'If this is not a piece of great art, you are going to be fucked.' When I was shooting, I forgot about this, but one day, when I was stuck in traffic, I



TEN-GALLON HAT IN A ONE-GALLON LIFE

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thought, My God! What am I doing?" He thought that he might be jailed when he submitted the final cut. To his surprise, he was not. But his movie was put in cold storage.

It took Mohammed fourteen years to make his second project, "Sacrifices," which portrays the breakdown of social relations under dictatorship. "It is the story of Syria," he told me. "A huge quantity of time has been lost by holding on to illusions—the illusions of heroism, religion, Arab nationalism—and by not dealing with the Other. The Other is not Israel. It is inside our homes. It is inside everybody." He decided to make a movie that was more introspective and metaphorical than "Stars in Broad Daylight" but just as daring. One boy in the movie, he told me, represents his loving side; another represents his tyrannical side. "It's easy to insult the dictator," he told me. "It's much more difficult to find the dictator inside yourself."

When the script was completed, Mohammed submitted it to the National Film Organization. The scenario, about a dying man with a large family whose members are all competing for his blessing, was lyrical but obscure, and laden with references that government officials found both mysterious and dangerous. What, they demanded, was the meaning of the child who places birds inside bottles? Or the baby who floats, like Moses, down a Syrian river in his bassinet?

The film ends with a shot of a giant tree, just after the boy who represents Mohammed's loving self crawls into a casket. "The tree is positive, right?" a member of the National Film Organization asked him. "It's the homeland, right?"

"No," Mohammed said. "The tree is the tree."

He certainly didn't make it easy for himself. "You want to know my opinion about Syrian politics?" Mohammed recalls saying. "Is it democracy? Absolutely not. Is it dictatorship? Yes. But if you want this country to have a democracy after a hundred years, then this is our work together right now. So don't shit on my film."

One scene, in particular, troubled the director of the National Film Organization. Three boys are taught how to slaughter a cow while reciting verses from the Koran. "All the West is attacking us because, for them, we are killers and extremists," the director told Mohammed. "You don't want to say that." He asked Mohammed to cut the scene.

Mohammed refused, claiming that violence was an essential part of the culture. "You can't be a man unless you learn to kill," he declared. The scene represents the initiation of a new generation into the pathologies of Syrian life.

The men were at an impasse. Mohammed finally said, "I know a secret about you. When you were young, you jumped from one building to another to meet your girlfriend."

According to Mohammed, the bureaucrat was astonished. "How do you know this?" he asked.

"Ask the man who jumped what he thinks. Does he like the script?"

"It's amazingly beautiful."

"Please, follow *yourself*. Don't forget who you are."

"Go!" the director of the National Film Organization said. "Do it!"

Four years later, when "Sacrifices" was finally completed, a government committee, which included Baath Party officials, demanded considerable cuts. Mohammed declined, even though he knew that the film would therefore not be shown in Syria.

Mohammed's brother Ali happened to wander into the Rawda Café while we were talking. I recognized him—a white-haired man with kind green eyes—because he appears in "Sacrifices." In a startling scene, a pubescent boy is tied to a post after violating the fast during Ramadan. A Koran is tied into the knot of the rope. Ali enters and unties the rope. The image is deeply personal: Mohammed had told me that Ali was the first in his family to deny the authority of religion.

"When I did that scene, Ossama took me aside and asked me to push my anger," Ali said. "So I told him a story. When I was in prison, someone came to take a thirteen-year-old boy to Palmyra prison. He was terrified. He held on to me and pleaded not to let them take him away. This shot is for that boy."

"Sacrifices" received enthusiastic reviews at its première, at the 2002 Cannes

Film Festival, although some viewers were put off by Mohammed's elliptical storytelling. Indeed, when I first saw "Sacrifices," the references seemed so personal that I wondered if this is what happens when a director no longer expects to have an audience—he makes a film that is entirely for himself. Even Syrian intellectuals who have obtained the film on the underground DVD circuit were puzzled by some of the scenes, like the opening shot, which shows a naked boy being lowered into a cave to fetch a chicken, or the sequence in which a boy's pants burst into flames.

Mohammed does not see the hermetic qualities of "Sacrifices" as a weakness. "The kitchen of cinema here is full of poisonous materials," he told me. "But we are lucky as filmmakers to work in this kitchen. Because there is no audience, at least we don't have to worry about the censorship imposed by commercialism." He paused, then said, "Even if there *were* an audience, I would not change my ways."

In 1992, Omar Amiralay, after making eight films in France, came back to Syria. "I was fed up with Paris," he said, and he sensed that he could go home without being arrested. Also, he had fallen in love with a Damascene woman. "It was a sentimental return," he said.

But Amiralay had a score to settle, too. As a young documentarian, he had been given the chance to make a movie about the damming of the Euphrates River. The result, "Film-Essay on the Euphrates Dam" (1970), was heavily influenced by Soviet documentaries, with a reverent approach to the mighty instruments of labor. He now sees it as a naïvely Marxist work—"a hymn to the crane" is how he refers to it now—that is shamefully uncritical of the Baathist regime. In 2003, he returned to the dam region. "I wanted to make a film of fifteen shots, which are the fifteen reasons I hate the Baath Party. The last reason was that I hate myself, for having been obliged to make a film for them. They spoiled forty years of my life."

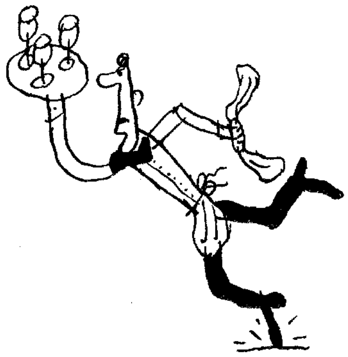
While doing research for the new documentary, "A Flood in Baath Country," Amiralay came to believe that the real reason the regime constructed the dam creating Lake Assad, as the massive reservoir is called, was not to generate hydroelectric power but to protect itself against the remote possibility that Turkey, Syria's northern neighbor, might choke off Syria's water supply in a hostile political gesture. As a consequence, Amiralay said, thousands of farmers were displaced, and archeologically important villages were drowned. "The thing that angered me the most is that I learned that this was the place where human beings became farmers for the first time, and left the hunting-and-gathering stage, eleven thousand years before Christ."

"Flood" begins with a bitter voice-over. Amiralay says, "In 1970, I was a firm advocate of the modernization of my homeland, Syria, so much so that I dedicated my first film to the building of a dam in the Euphrates River, the pride and joy of the Baath Party then in power. Today, I regret this error of my youth."

"For me, that first film is a deep wound in my heart," Amiralay told me. "I was able to make a career outside of my homeland. I don't regret it, but if they had given me the chance to live in Syria maybe I and my colleagues could have created a better country." The rueful "Flood" is a skillful and mature attack on a regime that has destroyed the people as willfully as it ruined the land.

I asked if "Flood" had ever been shown in Syria. Amiralay shook his head. "But when I finished I decided to give it to some film pirates," he explained. "Two months later, everybody in Damascus had seen it. It was a digital flood."

In April, 2000, the filmmaker Nabil Maleh started the Committee for the Revival of Civil Society, along with a small group of lawyers and intellectuals. Decades earlier, Maleh had directed some of Syria's most insurrectionary movies, including "The Leopard" (1972), a historical film about a revolt against an earlier Syrian regime. Maleh, who is seventy, is old enough to recall Syria in the nineteen-fifties, when it had a vigorous press and numerous political parties, as well as a vibrant civic life.



Once the movement got going, allied committees began springing up all over Syria. Hafez al-Assad died that June, which increased expectations that Syria might finally open up. In September, ninety-nine prominent Syrians, including fifteen filmmakers, signed a petition calling for an end to the restrictions on freedom of assembly, opinion, and the press; a general amnesty for all political prisoners; and a decree allowing political exiles abroad to return. The regime responded by releasing six hundred political prisoners.

In January, 2001, more than a thousand prominent Syrians, some of them living in exile, signed a broader and more daring petition, called the Basic Document, which had been drafted by Maleh's committee. The Basic Document called for an end to Baath Party domination. "Immediately came the crash," Maleh recalled. Bashar al-Assad warned that the advocates of greater openness were outsiders and were undermining the stability of the country. He declared that all social, political, and cultural gatherings had to be approved in advance. A few months later, ten signatories of the Basic Document were imprisoned for "attempting to change the constitution by illegal means." (Some of them remain in prison, in solitary confinement.) Officials told Maleh that he would never be able to make films again. The government effectively smothered the reform movement, even as it maintained the appearance of liberalizing by releasing elderly political prisoners and allowing the publication of new journals with minimal political content. "The development of civil-society institutions must come at a later stage," Bashar said in an interview with the pan-Arabic newspaper *Al Sharq al-Awsat.*

"We lost the war without ever fighting it," Maleh admitted one evening at dinner in an old house in the Christian quarter of Damascus, now a lovely but generally empty restaurant. I had suggested that political opposition in Damascus often seemed more gestural than real, and that making movies no one could see was therefore a characteristic expression of Syrian dissent. Perhaps the society was so tamed by the regime that no more could be expected of it; but it was also possible that the regime was in part the political expression of a brutal and authoritarian culture.

Maleh had told me about an incident in his childhood, when he was seven years old. "I was with my family in a public park in Damascus," he recalled. "I wanted to use the swing. There were some children already playing there, and they were guarded by a soldier, probably a driver for some big shot. I don't know what I did to provoke it, but the soldier slapped me, knocking me four metres away. I picked up a clod of dirt, threw it at the soldier, and ran away. From that moment, all my life has been connected with a hatred of the uniform and of authority."

This anger was palpable in Maleh's films, most poignantly in "The Extras" (1993), in which two lovers meet at a friend's apartment for an assignation. They suppose that they have finally shut out the world that has prevented them from consummating their relationship, but fear prevents them from enjoying their moment alone. The film gets its title from the male character, who plays bit parts in theatrical productions, underscoring Maleh's belief that "we are all extras in this society." The real world intrudes when the secret police enter the apartment, supposedly concerned about a blind musician who lives next door. The man tries to prevent the musician's arrest and, in a reverie, imagines dispatching the police with a few judo moves, but his fantasy is broken by a hard slap that knocks him to the floor. He is humiliated and powerless in front of his lover—a devastating turning point in their relationship. "They enter the apartment as lovers," Maleh told me. "They leave as strangers."

Maleh confided to me that he had once been beaten by the police, after a public protest. "I was taken to prison for a day or two and slapped around," he said. "It was part of the fun of the times."

I thought of other scenes in Syrian cinema in which physical abuse plays a significant role—for example, in "Stars," a character is made permanently deaf by a blow from his father. These scenes, I knew, reflected the filmmakers' experiences. When I asked them about the abuse, however, their responses surprised me. Abdulhamid, whose films often feature punitive fathers, told me about going to see "Hercules" when he was a boy. Afterward, he ran into his family's wheat field with a stick, engaging in mock battle. When he damaged a few stalks, he said, with a smile, "my father beat me." Amiralay, whose father died when he was five, said, "I was beaten only by the slippers of my mother, and for this I am grateful. Such beatings awakened me."

I went to dinner one night in a restaurant with some Syrian artists, and I brought up the subject of physical abuse. "It's common," the middle-aged woman across from me acknowledged. "But this happens everywhere." She added, "For me, it was a positive experience."

"What do you mean?"

"I was twenty-six years old," she recalled. "At first, I was hurt. I was living just to please others—for example, my ex-husband and his family. Then I realized that a word from your mouth can make the difference between survival and destruction." She was staring at me; her shining brown eyes seemed strangely untroubled.

"A beating did this for you?"

She nodded. "It was like a revolution. It was like you are not living anymore to please others. You suddenly become very brave. I was one step from death, but I was thinking of my children, and I was determined to survive. It was positive for me. This is when I decided to be a creative person."

"So your ex-husband hit you?"

"No," she said quietly, so the other guests wouldn't hear. She took my notepad and wrote, "Raped by the government."

Later, I asked Maleh if Syrian society had always been so abusive. "No," he said. "Violence became a part of the daily practice in the last forty years." The Baathist throttling of democratic expression, he believed, replicated itself in the relationships between authority figures and people without power—women, children, and the poor.

Damascenes like to think of themselves as a pragmatic race of merchants who have survived millennia of repressive governments. They believe that they are superior to their Iraqi neighbors, whom they see as defiant and bloody-minded. "When the Americans destroyed Baghdad, in 2003, it was the twenty-fourth time in history this has happened," Ibrahim Hamidi, the *Al Hayat* bureau chief, told me. "Since the beginning of civilization, Damascus has never been destroyed." Amiralay recalled that an archeologist friend once sent him an e-mail with an image of a sheared-off cliff face, the strata of geological time clearly exposed. "You see this line?" the archeologist said, indicating a dark ribbon about ten centimetres in width. "It is eight thousand years of history." The whole history of Syria, Amiralay said, had been exposed to view. "I think the Baath period will be only a fraction of a millimetre on that scale," he said.

I asked him if, in that long history, there was ever a moment when the people of Syria had lived free and happy lives.

"I don't care," Amiralay said, testily. "It's a beautiful image."

Although the filmmakers often talked about freedom, they revealed a perverse desire to romanticize the artistic constraints of dictatorship. "The most beautiful Soviet films were produced in the era of Stalin," Abdulhamid told me. "When the Soviet Union collapsed and suddenly you could say whatever you wanted, the Russians began producing the most trivial films. Nobody should be forbidden to say what he wants, but it is a phenomenon that dazzles me: when you're suppressed, you *think* better."

The example that haunts Abdulhamid and many other Syrian filmmakers is Iran, where artists such as Abbas Kiarostami work under even more restraints than the Syrians. "They have to work within this box, but they show their films all over the world," he marvelled. Hatem Ali, a prominent television director, has studied Iranian films closely. "The fact that they have succeeded tells us a lot," he says. He gave the example of a scene in a film by

Mohsen Makhmalbaf, depicting an old woman who lives with her son. "She is in a wheelchair, and her hair is gray and unkempt," he said. "All the windows are covered, and somehow this film is talking about the isolation of Iran. The surprise comes when you learn that this actress is not a woman—it's a man. My makeup artist showed me all the photographs of how it was accomplished. In Iran, it is not acceptable for an actress to show her hair, but it would not be realistic for this elderly woman to appear in her house in *hijab*. So the director used a man." The lesson he drew from this was: "It is the art that is important, not the censorship."

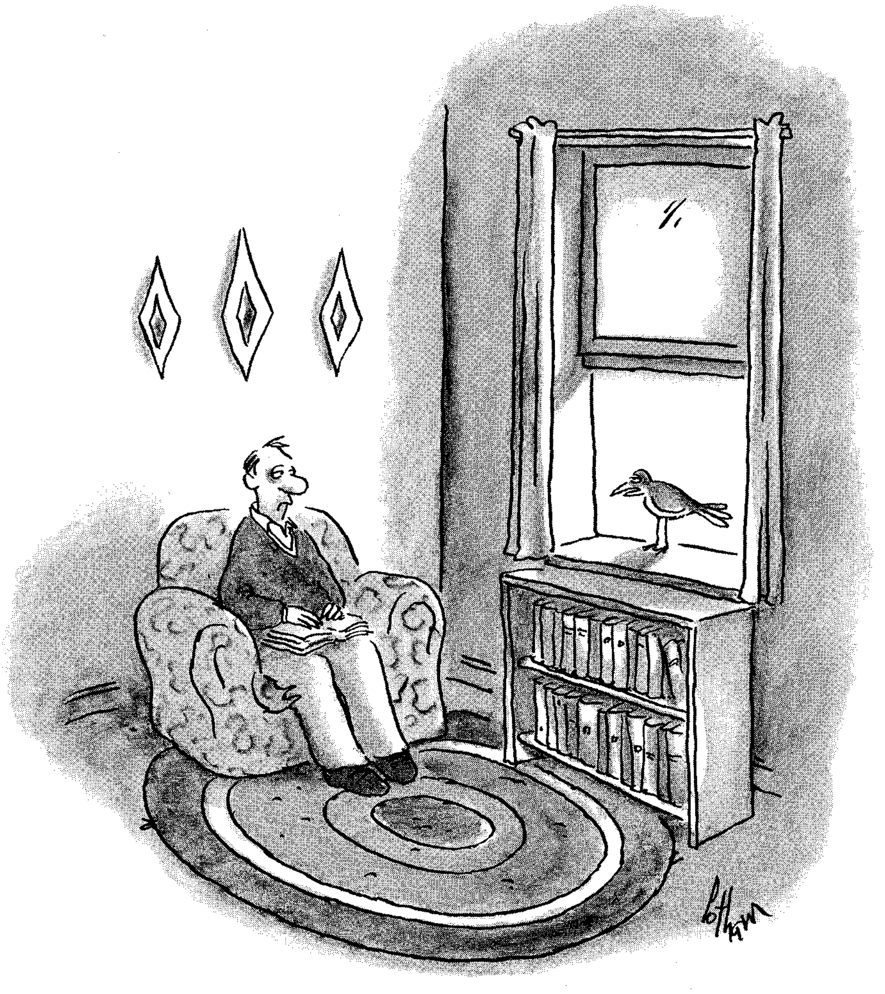
"The Arab cinema has few masterpieces—no more than ten," Omar Amiralay pronounced one afternoon over cappuccino. Among them he included two Egyptian films, "Cairo Central Station," by Youssef Chahine, and "Fools' Alley," by Tewfik Saleh. Both films, he observed, were the directors' first major efforts. "It is a syndrome in Arab cinema that directors who make a remarkable first film rarely succeed in making another," he said. There were no Syrian films in his pantheon.

I asked where he placed his friend Ossama Mohammed. "Ossama is an exception," Amiralay said. "But he hasn't had the liberty to make an accomplished film, and, of course, he suffers from a lack of opportunity and experience." Syrian films have the potential to be great films, he continued, "but they lack the dimension of unity—the compact structure, the purposeful style, the visual sensibility. Many of the actors are not sufficiently mature or experienced. I always feel there is something wrong, as if they were ordinary people who were simulating acting. And, finally, the narration. We are so obsessed by daily reality that scriptwriters don't have the courage to invent new realities from their own imaginations. Because of this, I think they are making bad documentaries and passing them off as fiction."

Amiralay hopes to establish a school of cinema in the Middle East. He is working in conjunction with a European film institute. "It will be an academy that will have a three-year program with different specializations—photography, editing, directing, scriptwriting," he said. He said that his dream is to bring the institute to Damascus, if political circumstances permit. "We have until 2008 to decide about our location," he said. It was one of the first notes of optimism I had heard since arriving in Syria.

One evening, I went to the Old City with a Syrian cameraman, Samer al-Zayat, for a drink at Café Mar Mar, in a sixteenth-century building with stone walls and twenty-foot ceilings. We walked into a roomful of upturned faces illuminated by the familiar flickering light of a movie. I had stumbled upon the latest incarnation of the Damascus Cinema Club. I ordered popcorn and a Martini (it's a very congenial club) and watched "Big Fish." In attendance were many of Syria's film and television stars, who apparently have enough influence to keep the underground operation alive. "This is the only venue left for new artistic movies," Zayat told me. "They advertise by S.M.S. messages on the telephones, and show films every Monday night. Last week, we watched 'Munich.' " Unlike the old days of the cinema club, however, the audience departed quietly when the film was over.

The week after I left Syria, a government-approved newspaper announced that, the following day, Ossama Mohammed's "Sacrifices" would be given its first public showing, in Homs, a provincial town in central Syria. The suddenness of the announcement seemed to be connected to the government's awareness of this article. Mohammed raced to Homs, only to discover that his film was not being shown after all; instead, a Baathist youth rally was under way. Though he knew that he wouldn't change the situation, he acted out the role of the fearless dissident. "I shouted and made a scene," Mohammed told me. "I said I would call the governor. I really played the game." ♦

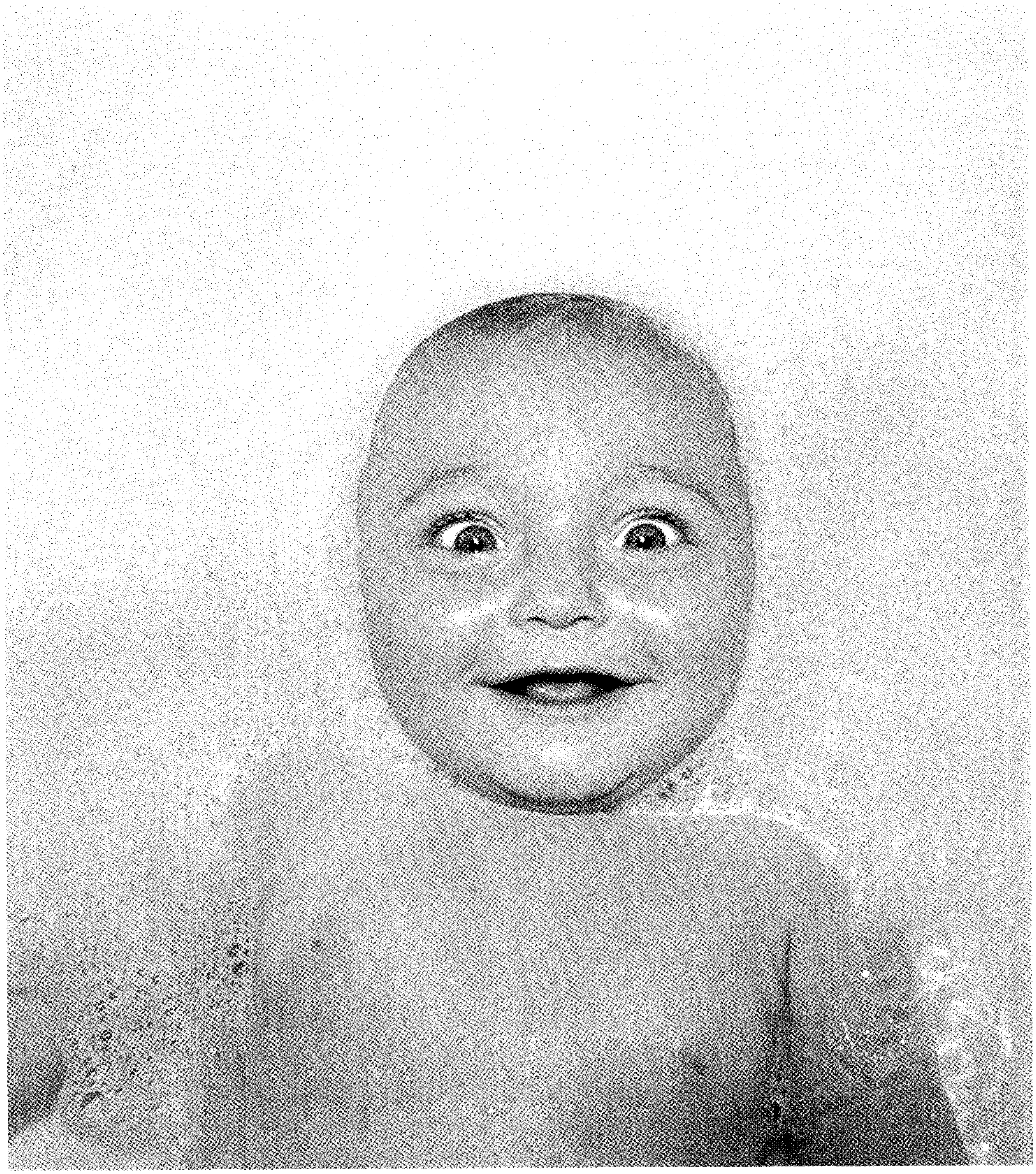


"Happiness is not readily transmittable from bluebirds to humans."

FICTION

ADINA, ASTRID, CHIPEWEE, JASMINE

BY MATTHEW KLAM



Saturday night Julia sat staring at a candle. It was after eight. She needed to eat.

She hadn't felt tired yet. She'd had a perfect pregnancy—no rashes, no fat feet, working full time, doing it all. A cartoonist couldn't have drawn a more adorable creature: rosy cheeks, pudgy nose, lime-green pregnancy pants drawn up over her stomach, white maternity smock.

Erica buzzed the front door with bags from the kebab place, and they set the coffee table and ate on the floor, with their backs against two ottomans. Erica wore fish-net stockings and a cotton cardigan that let her cleavage fall out, and told Julia about the sex she was having with her outlaw boyfriend, Malcolm—who couldn't commit, said he needed to "live monastically," then showed up at her house every night so riddled with guilt that she ended up comforting him on the rug in her foyer as he ripped her clothes off.

Julia ate too fast, choking on hummus, and accidentally drank what was left of Erica's wine. It tasted like cough syrup. She finished her kebab and rubbed a food stain off her shirt. Erica stared across the table at Julia as though she were trying to unscrew her own head.

Julia was embarrassed. It was mid-April. She was due June 17th. You were supposed to slip naturally into the new shape; you were supposed to love it. But she'd popped out hugely, and felt like a bear sipping tea. She was going to be a terrible mother.

After dinner, Malcolm arrived. He was tall and reddish, with a windburned face—he built houses for a living. He towered over them, touching them both, and invited Julia to join him and Erica at a party in the Palisades. Julia said she was too tired, and noticed him staring at her breasts and her belly, like a moron. When she kissed him good night, her face got hot. It was the wine, or hormones out of whack.

She got into bed but couldn't fall asleep. On TV, Brad Pitt was dressed in a black leather miniskirt, playing a warrior from ancient times who slept nude in animal skins. Lying there, she thought about Malcolm and his doglike stare. She used her vibrator, in an attempt to wear herself out, and accidentally broke her water. But she was two months shy of her due date and whatever came out, this little puddle, meant nothing to her. She wondered instead whether she'd finally hit her G-spot.

Sunday morning, she woke up with a warm physical pressure, almost like sadness, bearing down on her vagina. She was bleeding a little, but then it went away. By noon the pressure had shifted, and was sitting in her pelvis, where her bowels were. She left a message for Kevin at his hotel in Hartford, then another, until he called back. She ate some chicken, and then walked a mile and a half down Wisconsin Avenue to her gym, swam for an hour, and walked home. At four that afternoon, she tried to nap, but her belly hurt. She gave up on napping and waited for Kevin to come home.

Kevin spent the weekend shooting video of people speaking at a journalism conference—a Nixon-era geezer, a dopey mountaineer whose only training before typing up his best-seller had been a job painting boats. Nobody stuck to the subject, or laid out the fundamentals of writing Kevin needed for the video he had to put together. Famous people—Joyce Linden Fogg—whispered in a huge auditorium off the main lobby; Branson Kheils, a public-radio icon, rambled on about his first show in Minnesota (a pig slept in the yard behind the station) and brought down the house.

By Sunday afternoon, Kevin stood sagging under the weight of his twelve-pound camera; his overheating spotlight burned the side of his head as Dustin Christensen addressed the full session of two thousand to close the conference. Nothing about his latest project had been difficult, Christensen said, not the research or the writing. He'd infiltrated Afghani terrorists, slept beneath flying bullets. He'd used the proceeds from his blockbuster to build schools and roads in the mountains that once bred killers. Every word, every twitch transfixed the packed ballroom. It was the publicity tour that almost killed him, he said, and the Hollywood movie, and the luggage he'd lost on his way here. When the author finally took questions, Kevin slumped against the wall with the kind of exhausted relief you get from throwing up.

At last, back in his hotel room, Kevin wandered around in such a stupor that he packed too slowly and missed his plane. Waiting on standby at the airport, gazing at magazines at the newsstand as evening descended, he thought of all the things he'd never be, speeches he'd never give. He couldn't afford to buy a magazine because he was still waiting for the money from his last job, a heartwarming fund-raising film he'd shot for a fancy private high school. He felt so rotten he almost phoned Julia, but their last conversation warded him off.

"Sorry," he'd said when he finally reached her during the lunch break.

"Oh, God, Kevin," she'd said.

"What's wrong?"

"I just dropped a piece of chicken down my bra."

"I only have a second."

"Now I'm all covered with slime and grease on me. It's disgusting."

"It's O.K.," he'd said, because she was alone, and apparently bleeding, and seemed to be having some kind of problem. "I'm sorry you don't feel well."

"I drank wine last night by mistake," she said. "She's probably dead."

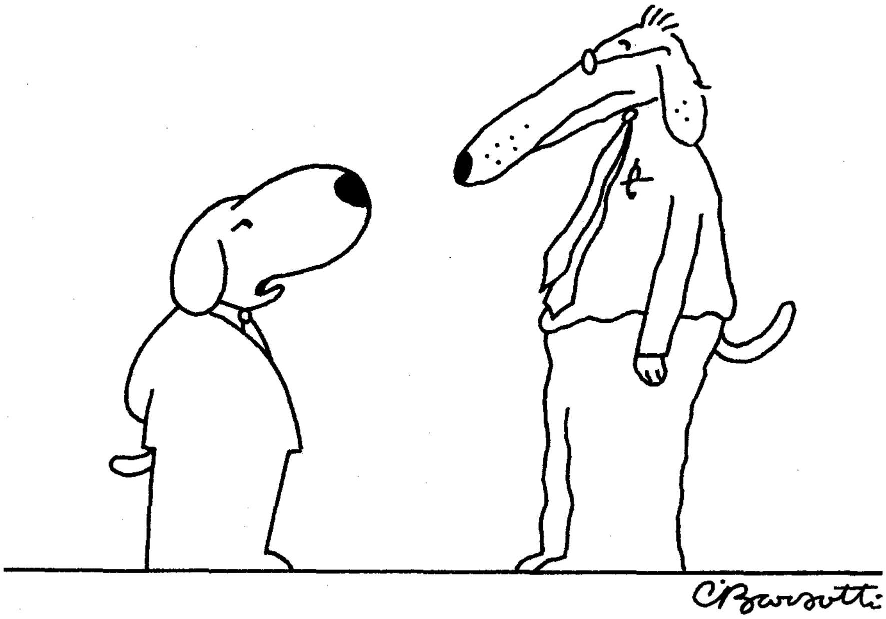
"My session is starting."

"Somebody get this thing out of me. Cut it out of me now."

Kevin had been out of college for two years when he got his first real job, writing press releases for an American gas company. He'd been living in cheap countries as an experiment, travelling to avoid working, but ended up in Japan, where people worked so hard they dropped dead on the sidewalk. It made the expat thing a little pointless. Back home, he spent nine years doing video production at a P.R. agency before starting his own business.

Nobody in his family had ever made a living in an imaginative career, and Kevin had no great store of talent, but, while at the agency, he began quietly working on his own film, a documentary. He'd read about this kid in the paper, a five-foot-six-inch basketball phenom named Durrell, who'd been beaten and starved as a child, and now played at a nearby college. Kevin politely stalked Durrell, and began making trips to his dorm room to tape these mind-blowing stories of life in the Montclair, New Jersey, projects. Durrell's mom was a "roller," and his dad had gone to jail for hitting someone with a sledgehammer. He had a stoic way of speaking that made him look, onscreen, like he

DETAIL: JUERGEN TELLER, "SMILING ED" (2005)/LEHMANN MAUPIN GALLERY



"We do all those old tricks electronically now."

was falling asleep. But so what. Kevin met the foster family, and filmed their evening meals, and flew to road games at his own expense, and shot hundreds of hours of footage—of coaches on leafy strolls, of Durrell playing XBox and doing his raps. After almost three years, with no end in sight, he finally gained the trust of Durrell's twin sister, a single mother on welfare, who was killed sometime later in a random act of violence.

Durrell blew his knee out at the end of his junior year, and then flopped in a pro league in Europe, and stopped returning Kevin's calls. At about the same time, a film with an identical theme appeared in theatres, to huge acclaim, and Kevin sort of fell apart. Since then, he'd started a few other projects—documentaries, conceptual video art, screenplays, children's books—but had quit them all. Though he still dreamed of finishing the film, or at least editing a promo, or whatever you call it, or at least watching some of the footage, he felt that the time for his own dreams had ended, or would soon, because he'd be a father, and he'd have to stand aside for the next generation—while also remaining upright, embalmed, rotting, for eternity.

On the flight home, he sat in a broken seat by the toilet and stared out the window as the engine wobbled beneath the wing. If it fell off now, the plane would smash into the Jersey shore. Maybe, if he lived, he could make a documentary about that. He'd interview the survivors, teasing out his own story, then slowly turn the camera on himself to reveal the hideous burns all over his disfigured head! Or he could write some kind of magazine article about it, or a book, or novelize it, or try it as a feature-film script. . . . It would be easier just to die.

At five, Julia thought she had to poop. She tried to call Kevin and took half a Midol. At seven, it came in waves; it bent her in half. I'm just wound up, she thought. I'm hungover. Because she was seven months pregnant, she got out the midwife's card and called, apologizing for bothering her on a Sunday evening. The midwife said, "If you go to the emergency room, they'll give you stuff to calm your cramps."

"The emergency room?"

"We can't do anything for you here." The pamphlet from the midwife's office described warm baths, lavender butter smeared on your forehead. What the hell was the point if at the first sign of anything they sent you to the hospital?

"All I eat is chicken. Do you think I have food poisoning?"

"It's possible."

"If I did, would it hurt the baby?" The woman didn't know. Jesus.

By the time Julia got downstairs, she was walking like her Grandma Gertie before Gertie had both hips replaced. She breathed heavily, leaning on a stack of magazines by the front door. She had a little trouble deciding on her next move and panicked and called 911. When a voice answered, she apologized and walked outside to her car. She felt like she was being whacked with a two-by-four.

Kevin landed at around seven and went straight to his office and dumped the footage onto his computer. The office was in a basement and his cell phone didn't ring down there; he ignored the regular phone, because the sequence of the sixty-eight speeches had to be tagged correctly.

At nine o'clock, he called home and to his relief got the machine. He left a message saying that he still had more work to do and that Julia should go to sleep without him. Please, God, he thought. And now he had to go find somewhere to eat. He hated eating alone. He just wanted five minutes with somebody other than Julia—who was grossly pregnant and uncomfortable, and kept the fan turned on so high in the bedroom that he had to build a wall of pillows to keep from being blown onto the floor.

Times were hard, and bound to get harder. The sound of a key in the lock—anything triggered Julia's insomnia. She woke up if a bird flew past the window. Last week, a chunk of her hair fell out. She lost her wallet in the lining of her coat, and, when she found it, she closed the bathroom door and cried. Her belly was immense and her boobs were veiny and her nipples were brown. She smelled different—like cooked custard. And she had an attitude now: "Stand back, here I come." She passed many sleepless nights eating nuts in bed, crunching with a squirrel's vigor. It altered their private business. Kevin loved sex, normally, anytime, anywhere. But now the sex was weird, because what exactly was going on down there? When he stared at that lump under the blanket, he felt self-conscious; he sensed an audience of skepticism and disapproval.

If he tried to talk to his sister or his mom about it, they got angry. If he said a word to his friends, the single guys acted horrified that a person could smell like custard, and the guys who had kids didn't care.

He and Julia got married three years ago, and right away they began trying.

When nothing happened, he figured God was punishing him for something. They'd been together for almost a year before the wedding, and their early days had been filled, for him, with the excitement of loving her so much better than Roberta, his terrible last girlfriend, who'd slept on a horsehair mattress she inherited from her grandmother. Julia was by far the most beautiful woman Kevin had ever touched, and the most decent—passionate to the point of hysteria about a five-year plan for public charter schools. She was slight and wore the same T-shirt to bed every night and had a pretense of helplessness, which applied mainly to lifting the five-gallon water jug, but it made loving a skinny girl romantic, and he'd loved her in greater quantity than he'd ever loved anyone. He was in love; she was easy to love. He'd walk through the door every night and be, like, "I'm living with someone and I'm going to marry her."

She had a puffy little moonface, and Kevin loved to kiss the soft belly of each cheek, but within five minutes something always happened to ruin the moment. At first, he took the awkwardness between them for lack of experience, but that wasn't the problem. They just didn't like to talk to each other. She'd start a story in the middle, and if he asked a question she'd say, "What? Huh?," as if she needed a hearing aid. Any time they spent alone together, whenever one of them asked the question "How are you?" it was like writing a thank-you note to a grandparent in a nursing home. By the time those moments ended, Kevin was a wreck. But then he'd been in relationships with good conversations, too. Understanding killed attraction just as quickly. Here at least the mystery kept things primitive and charged.

Their conversations improved with practice, but when he couldn't knock her up the awkwardness returned. At some point, he decided to shut up more, so she shut up more, too, but that just made them strangers to each other. After a year, they found a clinic and she began making frequent trips to the doctor and they went ahead with it, not talking.

There was the Hawaiian porno tape he jerked off to at the clinic, the menstrual cycle on the refrigerator, the shots he gave her—big injections in her ass, little ones in her stomach. The pills she shoved in her pussy to make the lining more hospitable. The brave declarations they made as they faced the debate—donor egg versus flying to China.

Months passed, and it all became this tricky thing, like a blur in a photograph. She was blurring, smudging, not herself. Then there were the phone calls from the clinic—"Do it now"—the requisite screwing, the livestock feeling of it, the injunction against fiddling with himself, the creeping sensation that they were using up the last few drops he had, crawling toward the end.

She was ashamed. She starved herself on popcorn and soda and got too thin. He did everything he could to get away, staying late at work, eating dinner in a restaurant alone. A distance opened up between them. It was his failure, his weakness, but he couldn't tell anyone about it. He'd stopped loving Julia when he couldn't get her pregnant, but then, after two years of a humiliating and expensive twenty-nine-thousand-dollar fertility process, they'd succeeded, and now that she was pregnant he wished she was dead.

There'd been a case on television of a man who'd killed his pregnant wife, spawning special news reports. Tooling around the Internet, Kevin had learned that one in five pregnant women who died was murdered. A quarter of men who killed their wives killed them when they were pregnant. Women were strangled, bludgeoned, choked, drowned, burned alive, shot on the way home from a birthing class. Why didn't the guys just leave? Now he knew. He couldn't imagine actually strangling anyone, but the existence of the trend lofted him up on a dizzy little puff of curiosity. Watching Julia's belly grow, seeing her change, altered his world like a snowfall quieting everything. And yet he was nuts. He felt like he'd sawed off the top of his head. Instead of wondering how to fix it, he gave himself a gift: despair without shame. Freedom from the necessary revulsion with himself. Like some miserable Goth kid, his thoughts went straight to hell and made him stronger.

A paramedic took Julia up to the sixth floor in a wheelchair and one nurse put a bracelet on her wrist while another drew five vials of her blood. She liked all

3 Guys Stealing
DIFFEE

the attention. She got the feeling that they'd seen cramps like these before, which reassured her. Another nurse entered with papers to sign, and a fourth asked concerned, insightful questions. Two of the nurses were blond and wore diamond engagement rings, and another was worn out and motherly. The prettiest one put Julia in stirrups.

As a teen-ager, she'd spent some time in a hospital for bulimia and suicidal behavior, and she'd always looked back on it as the regimen that put order in her life, helped her collect herself and recover. The friends she'd made there, bound to her by their secret shame, remained the most important ones she had, to this day. Anyway, if she hadn't been locked up in that place she'd be dead.

Tonight she lay in the maternity ward of a teaching hospital, and the young doctor on call, a third-year resident, stepped into the examining room a little bleary, feeling his way around the room, blinking at her as though he'd come from somewhere dark. One side of his face was wrinkled where it appeared he'd been sleeping on it.

"You're having some pain," he said, and gloved up. "You need to maintain your fluids." He sat on a stool, and set a sealed plastic bag of metal instruments on top of her big bare stomach, and then began looking around, spinning on the stool. And then everyone had to laugh, because he was looking for the very bag that was right in front of him! He opened the bag and took out a speculum, which he stuck crookedly into her, accidentally cutting her. Her spasming innards rocketed into a worse state. She panicked. He twisted it around inside her.

"Yuh—you're in labor," he said loudly, "three centimetres," and his voice broke when he said it. "You're breech." He called for a sonogram and sent for the attending. When he withdrew the speculum, it had candy-apple-red blood on the end. There was blood on his glove, and he slid it off into the garbage as though it were covered with worms. He stared down at the floor and smiled apologetically, and the nurses rolled the sonogram machine into place and squirted gloop on Julia's belly.

The attending was a woman in her fifties with copper highlights in her hair. She held Julia's hand and spoke softly as she moved the sonogram thing around. She asked the young doctor what he saw on the screen. He studied the ghostly image. She turned to Julia and said, "Is there a possibility your water broke at some point in the last day or two?"

"My water?"

"Because there doesn't seem to be too much in there."

Julia remembered the stuff coming out the night before. "How much is missing?"

The attending wiggled the thing more. The contractions were seven minutes apart. Stopping them would be tricky, she said. Bringing the baby out now would be worse. More nurses came into the room. One asked if there was a family member Julia could call. She'd left messages for Kevin in three places. She gave them Erica's number.

They wheeled her into a room with a view of the plaza, and the attending put a clear bag of viscous-looking fluid called magnesium sulfate into the I.V. machine, assuring Julia that it was safe. "Some people don't love this drug," she explained. "But it helps the muscles to relax, to stop your contractions. We need to stop your contractions," she said, and left.

It hit her head first. Almost immediately, Julia went cross-eyed and half dead.

EVERFAST
CLEANERS

"Look, I brought it in to be cleaned, not critiqued."

He called his buddy Ethan. He wanted to meet him at Schwann's, an old wood-panelled restaurant in Georgetown where Khrushchev had once sat with Nixon for a photo op, where the waiters were old men who wore smocks and kept their faces frozen while you ordered. Ethan understood what Kevin was going through; he was married, with three kids. But Ethan had a gigantic book contract that was killing him—he had to get some work done—so he told Kevin to stop by the house instead.

Ethan lived in this fucking mansion on P Street, a National Historic Landmark, according to the plate by the door. The doorknob was brass, and the size of a grapefruit. Trips to Ethan's house left Kevin feeling worthless and desperate, although Ethan's family had enough problems, the older girl with two-per-cent listening comprehension, the younger one shoplifting from stores on M Street, the three-year-old boy refusing to speak except in the broken English of the Guatemalan nanny. Ethan had written two decent books on politics and almost finished a third; and he had a good job talking on a cable news show. But he'd married Carrie, who was worth whatever the stock market did to the third of a billion dollars she'd inherited in 1990, and her wealth made it hard for him to keep his balls.

As Kevin came in, he could hear Ethan's girls screaming up the wide staircase, or maybe down in the ballroom they'd had painted like a jungle and filled with trampolines. If someone were being flayed alive it might have sounded the same way, that screaming, but Ethan just sighed and clucked his tongue, leading the way past fresh-cut flowers and oil paintings, until they entered the white-tiled kitchen with its endless counters, where a fat Rottweiler looked up to see what they were doing. Kevin could hear Carrie, somewhere, calling Ethan's name.

In the refrigerator were sodas and open wine bottles, a tray of wilted vegetables from a caterer, and part of a cake. They stood smearing butter on pieces of focaccia, listening to the screams. When a lull hit, Ethan yawned. Over the weekend, he and Carrie had hosted three parties: one for Carrie's grandmother, one for a nine-year-old, and one for Eliot Spitzer.

"I'm not gonna make it," he said, meaning the deadline for his book.

"You'll make it." There was a bottle of Scotch on the counter and they each had a shot. It tasted like gym socks soaked in gasoline. They had another. Soon the kitchen started to feel more like Schwann's.

"How was your thing in Hartford?"

"Fine."

"Julia O.K.? You ready? To become a father, a dad? You psyched?"

Kevin said yes.

"You're having a little girl."

"I know," Kevin said. "Here's to the greatest adventure a man can know."

"Aye, muchacho," Ethan said.

It sounded like furniture was being dragged across the floor upstairs. "Carrie!" Ethan yelled toward the dining room. "Honey, is everything O.K.?" They waited. "You'll be fine," he said to Kevin.

Carrie appeared in the back of the kitchen, having materialized from somewhere, like a ninja. She said hi to Kevin, but her lips were tight. "You're on for the rest of the night," she told Ethan, and filled a glass with water. "You haven't done a fucking thing all weekend." She walked out.

"Heh-heh," Ethan said. He walked to the foyer. "Don't leave."

"I should get going."

"I'm just gonna check on things."

"I'd better go."

Ethan called back. "Don't move."

"I'll see you later." Kevin let himself out as Ethan walked up the stairs.

An hour later, the young doctor threw the door open carrying a big yellow coffee mug with a smiley face on it and sort of skipped into the room as though he were kicking through rain puddles. "Doin' all right?" he asked, taking a drink from his mug. "How's the mag working out for ya?" He walked around, making notes on her chart. "Sometimes magnesium makes people irritable. It causes the heart to beat irregularly."

"Is this active labor?" She was shouting. "Is it stopping? Am I going to work tomorrow?" Her tongue tasted like aluminum.

"What do you mean by active labor?"

"My doctors told me to call if there was news. My midwife."

"We called them." He tapped her knees, her wrists, and her elbows, then her ankles and feet. No reflexes. The computer by Julia's head indicated that her contractions were getting stronger. "Let us know if you have any double vision," he said.

Julia said, "Yes, I do."

He made a note and turned the lights off and let the door bang shut.

On his way up Connecticut Avenue, Kevin stopped in Woodley Park, in front of the building where a woman named Cynthia lived. She was the ex-girlfriend of a guy named Artie, who'd made films for the Discovery Channel and had a shelf full of Emmys. She'd taken Artie's old job and brought Kevin in to help her with a two-hundred-page script she'd inherited on the birth of Islam. Together, they'd cut it down to four and a half scintillating minutes, to be aired one day on the channel's Web site. Over the last three months, they'd met half a dozen times in a tiny editing suite, a cockpit with carpeted walls, and in that warm, hushed darkness they'd chatted and commiserated and drunk soda and confessed.

They'd discovered that they were both dying to move to New York City to jump-start their careers. They'd both pitched the same guy at Showtime, with the same result. Cynthia had been a dancer in her youth, and had débuted at New York City Ballet at nineteen; two weeks later, she'd dislocated her hip—had to be lifted and hauled off-stage. Kevin completely understood, because of his own unfulfilled promise. She couldn't explain to anybody how it made her feel, but Kevin knew that an awful, unfixable thing would never stay buried.

She was a tall, thin woman with broad shoulders and a skinny neck and a scrunched-up little mouse face. She had huge brown eyes, and this heavy bosom, and she'd lean over and put her boobs on the table between them in the editing suite and scream back at Kevin about their sketchy luck and stare into his eyes like a maniac. He liked that.

It was late. He probably should've called first. She was the only woman he could think of within eighty miles who was single and answered her phone after nine o'clock at night.

He didn't want to go home yet. It was spring, and a velvety breeze touched his arms, and tender little green buds hung softly under the streetlights. There was only now, and that made living exquisite. And, anyway, he'd be dead someday and none of it would matter. Also, if he came in and woke Julia up she'd lie there, devastated, for the next six hours, sighing her ass off, and would blame him, and he'd take the blame, and feel terrible.

The only light in the room came from the monitor by her head, hooked to her belly, a sickly orange glow. The only sound came from the baby's pounding rhythm, amplified through the machine, like a little air compressor blasting away. *Choo-choo.* Julia turned her face to the wall when the pain came, and wrapped her hand around the rubber-coated railing on the bed, dug her nails into the rubber, squeezed her eyes shut, and opened her mouth wide, but there was no sound. Something flipped inside. During the gaps in the flipping, she let go. Her body had been built according to certain rules, but those rules had now been broken. If it got any worse, she would have to kill herself. She could crawl to the window and slide out. She dug into the rubber. When Kevin showed up, he would call everyone. She felt hopeless, lonely.

A soft, round, coffee-colored orb appeared near Julia's head. It was a face, powdery smooth, with trustworthy lines, and it spoke with an accent from somewhere—the Caribbean, maybe—partly reading in a breezy rhythm, from notes, ". . . serious complications, of course, the risks in bringing a baby out of the womb prematurely are known . . . cerebral palsy, neurologic disorders, developmental delays."

There was white stuff caked around the edge of Julia's mouth. Her gums were bleeding and she moved her tongue to try to find out where.

"Higher risks of retardation, asthma, and congenital aortic deformities . . . It's not uncommon for preemies to undergo a number of surgeries."

Then it was quiet, thank God, and the woman asked if Julia had any questions. Ha, yeah. When Julia shook her head, it thudded, and fell into thudding rhythm with the *choo-choo* of the heart monitor, and the two of them sailed off on a glassy blue bay. The woman wrote something with what looked like a turkey thermometer. Julia turned her face to the wall when the pain came.

Scanning the face of the building for Cynthia's glowing windows, Kevin took a minute to think about what he'd say, then called from the street and told her how the man who ran publicity at the journalism conference had made him shoot the floral arrangements in the lobby, offering cinematic insights. " 'Howzabout,' " Kevin said in a goofy voice, " 'we drop that sunset over the Sheraton sign?' "

"You're kidding me!" Cynthia yelled. "Shut up!"

"I'm thinking about becoming a wedding videographer."

"Jesus, shut up!" she said.

"Hey, I have your lens," he said. "I didn't want to leave it in the office where somebody could swipe it. I'll drop it off on my way home."

He waited by his car on the corner, and a few minutes later Cynthia brought her dog, Jasper, downstairs. She wore a cute navy-blue miniskirt and a spangly T-shirt that said "Ciao Roma." They walked around the block and then back to the entrance to her building. In his mind, he was reporting these actions to someone. The dog, a white Yorkie with Milk Dud eyes, looked up at Kevin, and he took the leash from Cynthia's hand and ran his fingers over the dog's head.

Back in March, after a long night at the editing suite, Kevin had driven Cynthia home, but when he pulled up in front of her building she wouldn't get out. They'd been yakking all night. He hadn't had so much fun with anybody in five years. He'd wanted to do something. He shivered a little, and leaned over to say good night. She made an *oh* sound that caught in her throat, a garbage truck scared them, and they had a big laugh and she jumped out. Then, a few weeks later, they'd done the routine again, first talking exhaustively in the editing suite, getting that glow, then sitting in the car until he shivered. But there'd been no makeout session the second time, either, and that was it.

Cynthia had been seeing a guy in New York, and as they stood at the door she told Kevin that, since the last time she saw him, she'd been floored by the realization that the guy was a drunk. "I'm not afraid to be alone," she said. "And I'm not afraid I'll never find love."

"Of course," Kevin said. "You're thirty-two years old."

"I don't need any fuckhead boyfriend. I do what I want. I go out almost every night."

"You're living your life."

"You know what I made for dinner tonight?"

"What?"

"An egg-white omelette. With scallions. You know when I ate it? Nine o'clock."

"I envy your freedom."

Her skirt had a big plastic zipper on the front, and sat loosely on her hips, and as she talked he noticed that the skirt had slid around and now the zipper was on the side. During her glory days she'd taught ballet to Madonna, and dated a guy in the N.B.A. Kevin thought about those N.B.A. hands on her. He reached forward to give the leash back, and as she took it from him he tipped his head toward hers but she turned away, smiling.

He tried to explain. "I wanted to touch you in the car that night."

"I always love talking to you," she said.

"Me, too," he said.

She looked down. "Am I being too harsh?"

"What is this, ninth grade?" He took the lens out of his bag and handed it to her.

"You're a total freak," she said, smiling at him again and taking the lens. Then she got confused and stepped in and jangled him with a long soft hug, jamming herself against him.

He felt even more stupid now. "You sure you don't want to get one drink?"

"No, God, it's after eleven. I'm finished."

"Do you want to smoke a cigarette?"

"Don't give me all the power, Kevin. What do you think?"

"I think we should go upstairs."

"Right."

"Yeah."

"Don't look at me that way," she said. "I don't want to be the bad guy."

"You're just gonna go to sleep?"

"Go home to your pregnant wife."

Kevin stared at Cynthia. He had to hate her now. Maybe if he strangled somebody other than Julia he'd feel better. He blinked back tears and crumbled. "She ate three rotisserie chickens this week."

"That's good," Cynthia said sadly. "Fatten her up."

"She's fat enough. She looks like Tweedledee, with her preggo stretch pants pulled up to her armpits."

"That's cute."

"I'm gonna kill her in her sleep."

"What about the baby?"

"You think that would hurt the baby?"

"It might."

"See, that's the rub."

"It sounds like you don't like your wife."

"She has flaws."

"Well, God."

"Too many to name."

"Then she'll make an excellent mother."

It was almost midnight when Kevin got home. Julia's car was gone, the lights were on, and the front door was unlocked. What a fucking idiot. For a second he couldn't figure it out. But her book group met some Sundays and usually ran late. He wanted to slap her across the face with a brick.

He wanted her to go somewhere and never come back. He was so sick of this crap. If he left now . . . but that would be impossible. He had to find a way to get rid of her without getting rid of the baby. How could you do that?

He loved her, but he never wanted to see her again.

Kevin walked into the kitchen and without thinking began placing a stack of clean dishtowels into a drawer in color-coördinated piles.

Her face to the wall, her hand wrapped around the bedrail, she began to pant. Her eyes were fluttering behind her eyelids. Her cheeks puffed, her chin quivered. Then she gasped and her body stiffened. The nurse pushed her chair away from the bed and leaned over and placed her hand on Julia's forehead. The gesture startled Julia and big tears rolled down her face.

The young doctor stood at the foot of the bed. He clicked his penlight a few times and stared out the window at the plaza, at patients smoking cigarettes, trailing their I.V. poles. Against the weatherman's prediction, it had started to rain.

When the contraction ended, the nurse put Julia's bed down flat.

The young doctor said, "Heh-heh. I've just gotta, uh—" And he moved to his place between Julia's legs. An old goat from the obstetrics department strode in with military purpose and introduced himself to Julia. The young doctor very carefully inserted his fingers. "Please stop moving," he said. He thought he was feeling the skull, but then realized that it was still the hip. "Still three," he said.

"*Talk to her*," the old goat barked.

"You're still three centimetres dilated."

The old goat bent over and stuck his hand into Julia as though reaching for car keys that had fallen down the drain, and then cleared some phlegm from his throat. "Show me three." The young doctor held his index fingers about three centimetres apart. The old goat said, "That's five," and pulled the young doctor's hands apart. "That's eight. Slide over. Get out of the way."

"Hey, Fred, how's my old office?"

• •

Kevin carried his luggage upstairs and got undressed, glancing out the window for Julia's car. He thought back to his one big breakup after college, a relationship that had ended fairly well after five years, and he pictured that late-afternoon goodbye—he and Lisa had packed up the car, the car they'd bought together, and sat on the steps and split up the pictures in the photo album, then stood and hugged. Then she'd said something he never forgot, "Hey, you were good to me," and he said that she'd been good to him, too, and she drove away. And even now, after all this time, he missed her so much it ached to think about that day. He still talked to her every once in a while, and it was so easy to talk, easier than it had ever been with Julia. After she left, he'd gone upstairs to the empty apartment where they'd both been crying for weeks, and ordered Chinese food and turned on the TV and felt total relief. For a few months, he'd gone crazy, stayed out late, dated a cyclist named Jade, visited Cuba, and worked weekends. But he didn't establish anything with anyone, and he lived alone for a few years. There was the feeling of having been burned. By what, though? And now he had that feeling again, that lonely feeling, with Julia—he'd been burned by all of this, by his own hopes, and by his inability to do anything about the situation, to change the bad parts. Look at the mess, look at what he'd done. He was the only guy he knew who liked his wife and still tried to cheat on her every chance he got. That wasn't progress. It was nothing he'd recommend.

He felt, in the shower, as if he were washing off all the failures of the weekend. When he got out, she still wasn't home. The house was small and there was no other place for it, so one corner of the bedroom was being turned into a nursery. It had a stuffed penguin on the floor and a cardboard box of old baby clothes from his brother. The crib would be there in a month. Without unpacking his bag, Kevin got into bed and listened for Julia's car, but it had been a long day and he passed out.

The old goat hung his face at Julia and said, "We're getting a room ready. We're taking you in."

She felt herself going cold. The anesthesiologist pushed a painkilling narcotic into the I.V. and inserted the epidural. Nurses in masks flowed about her. They dropped the bedrail, slid her onto a gurney, and suddenly she lay there, on the cold plate, chatty as hell, her euphoria ballooning.

"I'm not going to work tomorrow, that's for sure. I'm on maternity leave now, that's for sure."

People busied themselves around her. Finally, the young doctor said, "That's right."

"I'm a mom now. I will be in a minute," she said. The young doctor grabbed her I.V. as they turned her. She caught his stare and held it and said, "I already love her so much."

Bin Laden got her. Kevin should've known. She'd been buried, and he looked everywhere and found her, at last, in Georgetown, in the middle of the street, probably dead and covered with pavement, except for her face, and he looked down and saw that cute little face of hers. Who'd done this? Bin Laden. He had to get her out. There were alarms going, ringing out loud, the police. They'd come from headquarters and were going door to door, banging on the houses along M Street. And you could hear the *boom-boom* of construction crews down on Thirty-fifth, trying to break up the street to save her, but they weren't here yet and he didn't know who else they had to save and he would just have to wait and it was awful, terrible—they were calling Kevin's name.

Then, in the fuzzy air between dreaming and consciousness, he heard Julia screaming his name, whapping on the door, and he stood dizzily and was moving downstairs in his underwear. From the other side of the door, she screamed for him. She didn't have her keys, she must have lost her keys. No wonder he'd had to marry her—she was so stupid.

But it was Erica, Julia's friend from the nutso ward, looking weird. Kevin said, "Julia's not here."

"You have to come to the hospital."

"What?"

"You're having a daughter."

"You what?"

"She's at the hospital." It went on like that for another ten seconds before he got it.

Julia said, "I was lying on the couch at seven o'clock tonight and I thought I had food poisoning."

"Uh-huh," the young doctor said. They were moving quickly, rolling her down the hall.

"I had the worst pain in my life and then it went away and five minutes later it came back. It never entered my mind I was in labor."

They stopped under the surgical lights inside the operating room. She could feel something cool, like ice water, across her belly.

"Can we wait a minute?" Julia asked. "He'll be here soon, I hope." The young doctor pulled his mask down and looked at the clock.

"I have to tell you," Julia said. "You're a doctor, so you'll know."

"I'm in medical school. I graduate in June."

"They had this movie on TV with Brad Pitt." She started to cry.

"It's O.K."

"I did something."

"All right."

"I wanted her out. I kept saying that, 'Get her out.' "

The young doctor waited another second. "You didn't mean it."

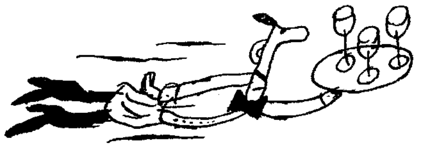
"I'm sorry."

"We're not machines," he said.

Erica pulled up to the hospital entrance and Kevin ran down the long corridor to the B-Wing elevator. Up on the sixth floor a nurse led him, shaking, into Labor and Delivery. It wasn't a heart attack so much as he'd strained the muscles that surrounded his heart. She gave him a paper suit and he shook as though he were freezing to death, putting each stitch of his own clothes in a plastic bag that she took from him, leading him into the operating room, where he squinted into the light, smiling at everyone, grinning madly.

"Look who we found," the nurse said, squeezing his arm. "It's Dad."

Julia's feet were toward the door. There were a dozen people around her. By her head, one guy fiddled with knobs on a bank of machines that Kevin, in his sleepy state, mistook for a film-editing system. Her legs were strapped down by two black seat belts. She'd been shaved. The skin above her stomach, painted a strange brown, was coated in some kind of wax paper. From her hip bones to her chest, the whole of her torso had been pulled open, a gaping bloody maw, pooling and flooding, stretched. A single band of gauze was tied, on one end, to a hook on the wall and on the other end to a small metal plate stuck in her skin that yanked her open, like something a sailor would rig up to hold a hatch in place. Naked of flesh, brimming with blood, her parts gushing, the pieces of her torso jiggled like gelatine. It looked like a torpedo had crashed through the roof and torn her in half.



Something like adrenaline moved him to the stool beside her head, where he sat behind a sheet that had been raised to hide the surgery from her, and took her hand and kissed it, and kissed her face.

"I feel so bad," he said, strangling off tears.

"Don't worry," she said. "Everything is O.K." She was gone, stoned, and so pale beneath her blueberry bonnet.

"Did you see anything?" she asked hopefully.

Kevin leaned over her disembodied head. He stroked her cheek. "Nothing. You're fine." He tried not to fall apart. His own stomach swam.

They had a little laugh then, in a bubbly, forced way, about the timing of it, how he would've been in Hartford if it had happened a night earlier. And laughed about the name they hadn't picked yet—Adina, Astrid, Chipewee, Jasmine. The people on the other side of the sheet clinked metal tools and mumbled and moved with urgent, clipped streams of nonsense. The old goat grunted epithets. The group fell into a rhythm.

Julia stopped mid-sentence, wincing, and Kevin lifted a bean-shaped plastic trough to her lips and she vomited into it. He glanced over the curtain and went a little cross-eyed at the sight of her. It was too much.

Two nurses placed their little bloody sponges on a tray and counted them in unison like children singing a nursery rhyme: *one, two, three*, touching each one, *four, five, six*, to twenty-five. Then they did it again, and then again.

When the baby came, screaming, Julia and Kevin stared at each other and froze, smiling dumbly. Finally the old goat said, "Dad, you can look," and Kevin glanced over the sheet and saw the young doctor holding the baby girl in his gloved hands. She was entirely fishlike and more purple than Kevin had feared, her tiny private parts swollen, her eyes sealed shut, and they wiped her face off as she tried to grab and hug the air in front of her. The doctor held the soft part of his pinkie to the roof of her mouth as the nurse rinsed her face. Then they whisked her away. Kevin kissed Julia and cried.

Without fanfare, Kevin was led to the baby, one room over, curled in a plastic tray under a heat lamp, writhing and screeching dryly and kicking her legs in the air. He examined her ears and lips and mottled purple skin. Oh, God, he thought as she screamed. Now there are two of them.

A tall, angular, dark-haired nurse strolled over, using the new familiar "Dad," and lifted the baby's foot. She needed blood and pricked it, and the baby screamed in a different way, and screamed and screamed, as the nurse calmly worked to bring blood to the glass tube, squeezing the little foot like a lemon, one drop, then another, bending the toes back against the shin, the little earthworm leg held up in the air. It appeared that, in her exuberance, the nurse had pinched off the blood flow to the foot by holding it this way, and Kevin felt sweat run down his back, as the white-hot rage of a thousand burning suns stoked his belly. He imagined himself kicking her, like Bruce Lee, in the head, until she finally released the foot. Because the baby had been in the breech position, her feet sprang up around her ears, and when the nurse pulled them down again they sprang back up and the nurse laughed as the baby screamed. She went to the other heel for blood, and then to a finger. In the end the baby was screaming so hard no sound came out.

Kevin sighed, covered in sweat, and smiled weakly at the nurse, who placed a tiny washcloth in his hand and suggested that he wash his baby. He put a hand on her chest and felt her soft kitten belly, her ribs like pasta. She looked a little like George Costanza.

It was sometime after three in the morning, on the fourteenth of April. Everything about this night reminded Kevin of powerful psychedelic drugs: his endless need to burn energy, his ultra-aware calmness, the sense of solace he found in his own oblivion, the way he moved among normal people, a changed human, unseen, and the feeling that he'd held back from learning all this until now. A torrent of new insights refused to recede. He checked in on Julia, then went back to the baby. He patrolled the sixth floor. He'd shifted his consciousness into a cosmic framework that no one on earth had experienced before. The lights were down in the neonatal I.C.U. The baby had two I.V.s and five wires connected to her, four on her chest, one on her ankle. The monitors glared above her. One was heart rate, one was respiration, one was oxygen level in the blood. He watched the beats. He watched and watched. He had nothing else in the world to do, and felt more peaceful and alert than he could ever remember. Beside him, in the dark room, a mother sat bleakly rocking in front of her glass case. Inside the case was a very tiny baby with a thin tube taped to its face, staring into space, dwarfed by its diapers, with a sock on its head, and huge, scary bug-out eyes. When he looked back, he realized that his baby was no bigger.

He watched his daughter's chest rising, a little hamster movement. He noticed that the tape holding the I.V. to the back of her ridiculous little hand was bloody. She slept peacefully, and her face shifted, and as it did she looked a little like his grandfather, then Jack Welch, and then Charlie Brown, snoozing by the window on a rainy afternoon.

He went back and sat at Julia's side. The lights were off there, too. He checked her chest, rising and falling, watched her breathe. She also wore a diaper. The temperature in the hospital was frigid. On her hand, he noticed a bloody piece of tape holding her I.V. in place and his heart ached for her and his throat burned. It came over him in a rush, in a moment, and he got rid of it just as quickly. She'd gone through it alone, and now she needed everything; she needed rest, she had to sleep. When she woke up, he'd be in this chair, with his two eyes open. A new motor inside him was running on high. ♦

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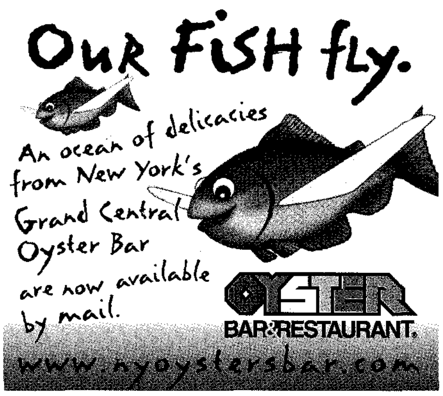

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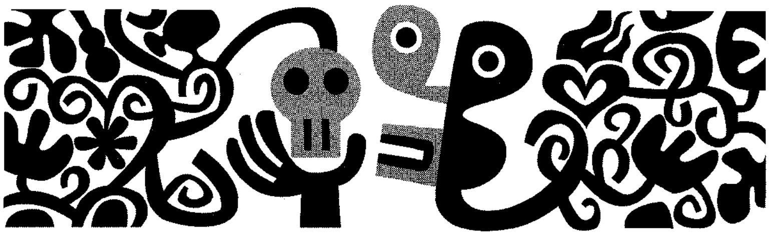


THE THEATRE

CRISIS OF FAITH

Brian Friel on terror and talent.

BY JOHN LAHR

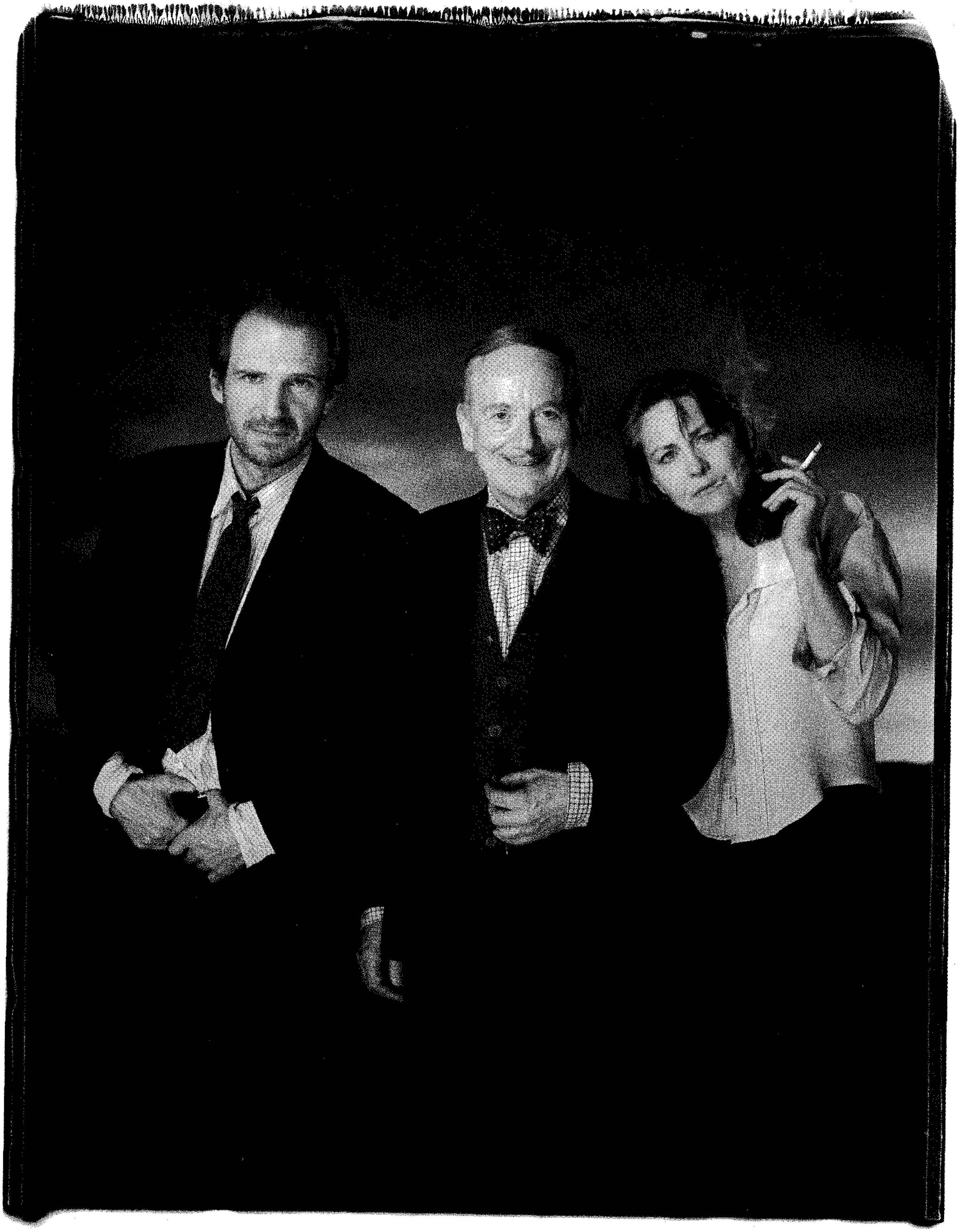
"The artistic life is a long, lovely suicide," Oscar Wilde said. The aphorism came to mind as I was watching the Gate Theatre production of the four eloquent monologues on the paradox of talent which make up Brian Friel's "Faith Healer" (imported from Dublin to the Booth, under the elegant direction of Jonathan Kent). The subject of the monologues is the Irish faith healer Frank Hardy (Ralph Fiennes)—the "Fantastic Francis Hardy," as the threadbare banner behind him proclaims. Frank's speeches are the first and last of the evening; through their evasions, omissions, and confessions, they chart the trajectory of his self-destruction. Frank's wife, Grace (Cherry Jones), and his manager, Teddy (the superb Ian McDiarmid), are the other witnesses to the healings he calls his "performances"—and to the price they all pay for his occasional miracles. Together, these three voices conjure up a shabby world that smells of booze and Primus stoves and stale halls deep with dust and wishes.

As the play begins, coals gutter suggestively in the grate of an upstage fireplace, and the rumpled Frank stands before us in the crepuscular gloom. He carries in his jacket pocket a weathered newspaper clipping, testimony to a "remarkable event" in a Methodist church in a small Welsh town where he cured ten people of ailments "ranging from blindness to polio." As Frank, Fiennes is outstanding. He exudes a natural, reticent magnetism; gaunt and thin, his sensitive features belie a fierce heart. Fiennes's Frank is a compelling bundle of prowess and panic. His blessing is also his burden. The chipper Teddy, who claims to have handled ingenious animal acts, realizes that this client has one thing that his whippets and his pigeons don't: intelligence. "All those bloody brains," Teddy reflects. "They bloody castrated him." Frank's appealing alertness brings with it a certain self-consciousness about his "ministry without responsibility." He is constantly questioning himself and his gift—"those nagging, tormenting, maddening questions that rotted my life." "Precisely what power did I possess?" he asks. "Could I summon it? When and how?" In this "feud between himself and his talent," as Grace calls it, the faith healer is a stand-in for every artist: he never quite comprehends the source of his own freakish gift; he can only work, wait, and pray for it to come. In the meantime, both for his audience and for himself, he hides his doubts about his mastery. "You're beginning to masquerade, aren't you?" he says to himself. Frank is certain of only one thing: "I always knew when nothing was going to happen."

In the course of the play, his inspiration becomes more and more scarce; at the same time, his drinking increases, and so does his abuse of Grace, whose love and loyalty he trivializes by referring to her as his "mistress" and by denying the existence of their stillborn son. (Even Grace can't acknowledge Frank's awful abandonment at the moment of the baby's birth, in the back of a van.) Frank's devotion is not to her but to those rare occasions when he finds himself in miraculous harmony with his talent. "I knew that for those few hours I had become whole in myself, and perfect in myself, and in a manner of speaking, an aristocrat," he says. Inevitably, the story of his struggle to recapture his spiritual powers becomes, instead, the story of the loss of a soul.

Sitting at a table, drinking and smoking as she talks, Grace tells us how she ran away with Frank as a rebellion against the stifling punctilio of the professional class into which she was born: her stolid father was a judge and she a newly qualified lawyer when she first met Frank and joined his raffish, peripatetic life. Grace is nervy and fragile and, as Jones expertly plays her, on the verge of hysteria. She is also mesmerized by Frank's performance of sensitivity. "He had a special . . . magnificence," she says. Grace can share everything with Frank except his creativity. "God, how I resented that privacy!" she says. "Many, many, many times I didn't exist for him. But before a performance this exclusion—no, it wasn't an exclusion, it was an erasion—this erasion was absolute: he obliterated me." Because she envies the inspiration to which their life together is dedicated, Grace unconsciously spoils it. When Frank fails, she becomes a punishing voice, mocking his powers and subverting them with scorn.

In Friel's brilliant storytelling, the refracted memories of the characters paint a harrowing picture of recrimination and self-aggrandizement. Lacking the courage to stop performing, Frank lets others make the choice for him. In a much recounted scene, on his return to Ireland, after years of touring through Scotland and Wales, Frank heals a man's twisted finger at a pub. A crowd of onlookers go off to find their paralyzed friend for him to heal. "If you do nothing for him, Mister, they'll kill you," the bartender warns him. "I know them. They'll kill you." Though Frank's intuition tells him that his power won't come through, he nonetheless goes outside to perform for the waiting cripple. The moment plays as both a surrender and a liberation. "I had a simple and genuine sense of homecoming," Frank says. "Then for the first time there was



Ralph Fiennes, Ian McDiarmid, and Cherry Jones as a doomed trio in "Faith Healer." Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

no atrophying terror; and the maddening questions were silent. At long last I was renouncing chance."

The spirit of renunciation takes an altogether more frivolous turn in "The Drowsy Chaperone" (deftly directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw, at the Marquis), which happens to be the most original musical of the season. The show begins in darkness. "I hate theatre," a voice says from the shadows. The disembodied litany of disappointment continues: "You know there was a time when people sat in darkened theatres and thought to themselves, 'What have George and Ira got for me tonight?' Or 'Can Cole Porter pull it off again?' Can you imagine? Now it's, 'Please, Elton John, must we continue this charade?' "

When the lights come up, the knowing, sad-sack narrator (Bob Martin, who also co-wrote the book with Don McKellar) is settled in an armchair at the side of the stage, a sort of Mr. Rogers of drama queens. The narrator lives in a cluttered one-room apartment with window grates, which looks out on a city landscape that is as dreary as his mood. But the minute he puts on a record of Gable and Stein's 1928 "The Drowsy Chaperone"—"Remember?" he says of this entirely fictional musical comedy—his world is renovated. The grates dissolve and the refrigerator door becomes a portal through which "The Drowsy Chaperone"'s garish, glamorous stock characters—low comedians, ingénues, Latin lovers—make their entrance. The narrator is the interlocutor between the play world and our world. The musical takes place in his head. He wanders in and out of the show, at one point even wielding his reading lamp as a spotlight. Sometimes he interjects a piece of historical information or a critical comment, turning the evening into a sort of show with footnotes. Occasionally, something intervenes to burst the narrator's bubble; there's a telephone call, the doorbell rings, the record is scratched. "Thank you. Thank you, life," he says bitterly. When the record resumes, the actors pick up exactly where they left off, in mid-song.

"The Drowsy Chaperone" cleverly deconstructs not just the folderol of twenties extravaganzas but also the frivolity of high camp. Here, where the bluebird of unhappiness reigns, the inevitable anthem is "As We Stumble Along." In a fine example of the impish music and lyrics, by Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison, the eponymous chaperone (the excellent Beth Leavel) calls it quits with meaning:

It's a dismal little world in which we live
It can bore ya' til you've nothing left to
give
Seven over-rated wonders
Seven underwhelming seas
Six excruciating continents
Antarctica—oh, please

With terrific energy and finesse, Lambert and Morrison jump all the formulaic hurdles, and get as close as any songwriters these days to a genuinely show-stopping number. The heroine of the musical within the musical, Janet Van De Graaff (the winning Sutton Foster), is quitting show business to marry the debonair hero, playfully named Robert Martin (Troy Britton Johnson). In "Show Off," amid the pop of flashbulbs Janet protests to the press, "I don't wanna be cute no more/Make the gentleman hoot no more/I don't wanna wear fruit no more/I don't wanna show off." As she sings, she is put through more hoops than a trick pony. There are a handful of songwriters around who can do witty; very few can do silly. This gleeful stuff is matched by a first-rate cast of players, especially Danny Burstein, who turns the transparently gay Latin lover Aldolpho into a whirlwind of bogus macho concupiscence. He ricochets around the stage, with the silver streak in his black pompadour ruffling like a bantam rooster's comb.

At the beginning of "The Drowsy Chaperone," the narrator tells us that he always prays at the theatre. "Dear God, please let it be a good show," he says. With its intelligence and its high style, "The Drowsy Chaperone" is a well-judged answer to those prayers. As it happens, I pray, too. Readers, won't you join me? Dear God, no more musicals based on movies, please. Make the producers more courageous, and keep the actors from thanking You and their loved ones in the program. Almighty Lord, may the ersatz and the "sung-through" die a horrible death. Amen. And, God, one more thing: in the future, can we have less camp and more joy? ♦

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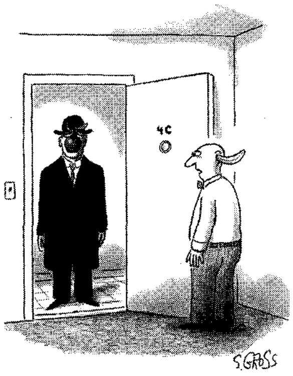

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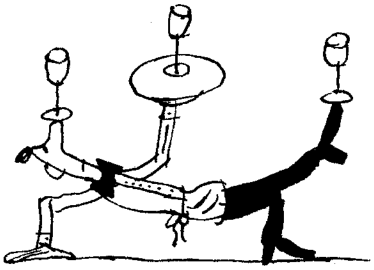
BRIEFLY NOTED

A Writer's Life, *by Gay Talese (Knopf; $26).* In a culture of success and celebrity, Gay Talese has always found his best subjects in failure and decline: Joe DiMaggio in his lonely eclipse; Joshua Logan in the midst of terrible depressions; Floyd Patterson struggling to express what it is to be knocked flat in front of a filled stadium. Talese's lapidary style and impeccable reporting standards have endured far better than the work of some of his more histrionic New Journalism contemporaries, but he has also known failures: long periods of struggle and silence, abandoned stories and books. Much of his memoir is about frustration and dead ends. When the U.S. women's soccer team defeated the Chinese in a shootout at the Rose Bowl, in 1999, Talese was interested in the young woman who had given up the deciding goal. A natural story for Talese, but he couldn't complete it. This book is a less polished construction than Talese's early profiles or "The Kingdom and the Power," but there is something distinctly moving about his decision to think through the work—and the years—that did not quite cohere.

Slaphappy, *by Thomas Hackett (Ecco; $24.95).* Hackett travelled around the various circuits of professional wrestling—that peculiar mixture of Olympic games and the burlesque, in which beefy athletes beat each other up in scripted bouts—determined to take its participants seriously. The result is an enjoyable and astute appraisal of a too easily maligned subculture. Hackett believes that wrestling, with its "blue collar" celebrity, convoluted sexuality, and faked reality, epitomizes something essential about American culture, although his attempts to discuss these theories with the subjects themselves often prove comically inconclusive. At one point, he tells a good-natured young wrestler named Altar Boy Luke (who has just insisted that "wrestling is real," unlike, say, "Star Trek") that somewhere among the sport's layers of fakery is a bit of truth, "and everybody is trying to figure out what that is." "And the truth is," the wrestler replies, "I'm an athlete and you're an asshole!"



Poppy Shakespeare, *by Clare Allan (Bloomsbury; $23.95).* In this darkly funny, excruciating first novel, N, who has been a patient at a London mental hospital for thirteen years, plays Virgil to Poppy Shakespeare, a sometimes manic single mother, who claims that she has been mistakenly committed. Allan's brash conceit is that N teaches Poppy how to act crazy so that she can be assessed, cured, and released; Poppy duly begins gnawing her fingertips and muttering. Allan's triumph, though, is pure voice: N's loopy, dead-on rants—about the vagaries of the system, her unspeakable childhood, and the other patients, whom she calls "dribblers"—blur the line between the mad and the sane, and express how the disenfranchised experience authority.

English, August, *by Upamanyu Chatterjee (New York Review Books; $14.95).* A best-seller when it was first published, in India in 1988, this satiric novel chronicles the reluctant coming of age of a privileged young man who has just entered the prestigious Indian Administrative Service. Posted to a small town deep in the interior, he finds himself a foreigner in his own country, wary of cholera, defenseless against mosquitoes, and shocked by the sight of a tribal woman: "They exist, he shrieked silently, outside arty films about tribal exploitation and agrarian reform." In revolt, he sneaks out of meetings, pretends to be the son of Antarctic explorers, and smokes copious amounts of pot. He's an avatar of the Western slacker: overeducated, bored, plagued with doubts, and incapable of action. Still, Chatterjee's story is uniquely Indian, as he plumbs his hero's fear of being "just one more urban Indian bewitched by America's hard sell in the Third World."

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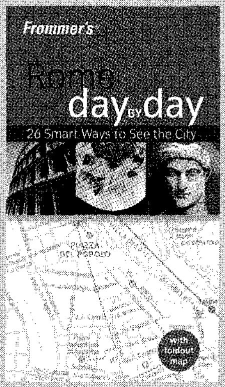

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

PARADISE SOLD

What are you buying when you buy organic?

BY STEVEN SHAPIN

The share price of the Whole Foods Market, Inc., now stands at $62.49. Adjusting for stock splits and dividends, one share would have cost you $2.92 when the company opened on Nasdaq, in January of 1992, so it has done extremely well. Last year, its total revenue was more than $5 billion and its gross profit was more than $1.6 billion. In 2004, according to the *Financial Times*, Whole Foods was "the fastest-growing mass retailer in the US, with same-store sales rising 17.1 per cent quarter-on-quarter." Having opened in 1978 with a single countercultural vegetarian establishment in Austin, Texas, Whole Foods now has a hundred and eighty-one natural-food supermarkets, including many acquired in purchases of smaller chains: among them, Wellspring Grocery, in 1991; Bread & Circus, in 1992; Mrs. Gooch's Natural Foods, in 1993; and Fresh Fields, in 1996. In 2004, Whole Foods opened a fifty-eight-thousand-square-foot mega-mart in the new Time Warner Center, at Columbus Circle, with forty-two cash registers, a two-hundred-and-forty-eight-seat café, and three hundred and ninety employees. "Our goal is to provide New Yorkers with an engaging shopping experience and to become an integral part of this truly unique community," a company executive said. And in 2004 Whole Foods crossed the Atlantic, acquiring six Fresh & Wild stores in London and making plans to open others there under its own name. Its ambitions are global.

I like to shop at Whole Foods. Sometimes I go there just to see the variety and the colors: what new kinds of chard and kale will they have today? The employees—"team members," as they're called—seem reasonably happy and are often quite knowledgeable about the things they sell. A Wellesley graduate is one of the company's prize exhibits. "I just hang on to the fact that my job is good in some larger sense," she says on the corporate Web site. "If people buy the sprouts, they're eating healthier foods, the farmer is doing well, and it's good for the planet because they're grown organically." Since 1998, Whole Foods has ranked high among *Fortune's* "100 Best Companies to Work For in America." Although the company is as ferociously anti-union as Wal-Mart—John Mackey, the volubly libertarian founder and C.E.O., has called unions "parasites"—Whole Foods limits the compensation of its highest-paid executives to no more than fourteen times the employee salary average, and it likes to talk about how it rewards team members' initiative. Mackey once told *Forbes*, "Business is simple. Management's job is to take care of employees. The employees' job is to take care of the customers. Happy customers take care of the shareholders. It's a virtuous circle." Whole Foods gives people what they want, or, at least, the increasing number of people who don't blanch at the prices, which have earned the company the presumably affectionate nickname "Whole Paycheck": $3.98 for a five-ounce plastic box of Earthbound Farm organic baby arugula salad; $2.98 for six and three-quarter ounces of intricately packaged Earthbound Farm organic "mini-peeled carrots with Ranch Dip." For the price of the fixings for a modest family dinner at Whole Foods, you could just about afford one share of its stock. The motto of the great English supermarket pioneer Sir Jack Cohen was "Pile it high; sell it cheap." Whole Foods has shown the rewards that can flow from the opposite policy.

Whole Foods is only the most visible face of the newly confident organic industry. In February, *Consumer Reports* announced that sales of organic products had gone up twenty per cent a year during the past decade, reaching $15 billion in 2004—out of a total U.S. food system worth a trillion dollars—and that nearly two-thirds of American consumers bought organic foods last year, paying, on average, a fifty-per-cent premium over conventional foods. In March, Wal-Mart made the remarkable announcement that it would double its organic-grocery offerings immediately. Wal-Mart is betting that, if it follows its usual practice of squeezing suppliers and cutting prices ruthlessly, the taste for organic foods will continue to spread across the social landscape. "We don't think you should have to have a lot of money to feed your family organic foods," its C.E.O. said at the most recent annual general meeting.

But icons beget iconoclasm, and, just when the organic business has attained cultural legitimacy, a market has opened up for debunkers. "Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew" (Harcourt; $25), by the business writer Samuel Fromartz, is a cultural, political, and economic history of the modern organic industry that is markedly critical of the distance that "Big Organic" has come from its anti-industrial roots in the early twentieth century. "Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California" (California; $21.95), by the geographer Julie Guthman, is a meticulous academic study of the institutional dynamics of the state's organic agriculture and asserts that organic agriculture, far from escaping the logic of capitalism, has wholly embraced it. And Michael Pollan's outstanding "The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals" (Penguin; $26.95) is a wide-ranging invitation to think through the moral ramifications of our current eating habits. Pollan undertakes a pilgrim's progress along modern food chains, setting standards for ethical eating which the industrial approach of Whole Foods and its suppliers fails to satisfy.

Such criticisms reflect growing discontent among many veterans of the organic movement. As one consumer advocate told Pollan, "Organic is becoming what we hoped it would be an alternative to." This disillusionment is fuelled by questions about quality, sustainability, and business ethics—but it is also, crucially, a matter of ideology and morality. For many who participated in the early phase of organic farming, its subsequent history is a story of paradise lost—or, worse, sold—in which cherished ideals have simply become part of the sales pitch. According to the Web site of Earthbound Farm, a major supplier of Whole Foods, eating organic is an almost spiritual quest: "We honor the fragile complexity of our ecosystem, the health of those who work the land, and the long-term well-being of customers who enjoy our harvest. . . . Organic farming encourages an abundance of species living in balanced, harmonious ecosystems." This is late-modern georgic in its ripest vein. Where Virgil asked, "What makes the cornfield smile?," Earthbound Farm's Web site has the answer: the use of "earth-friendly methods to grow healthful crops without relying on chemical pesticides or using synthetic fertilizers." But the reality is no idyll.

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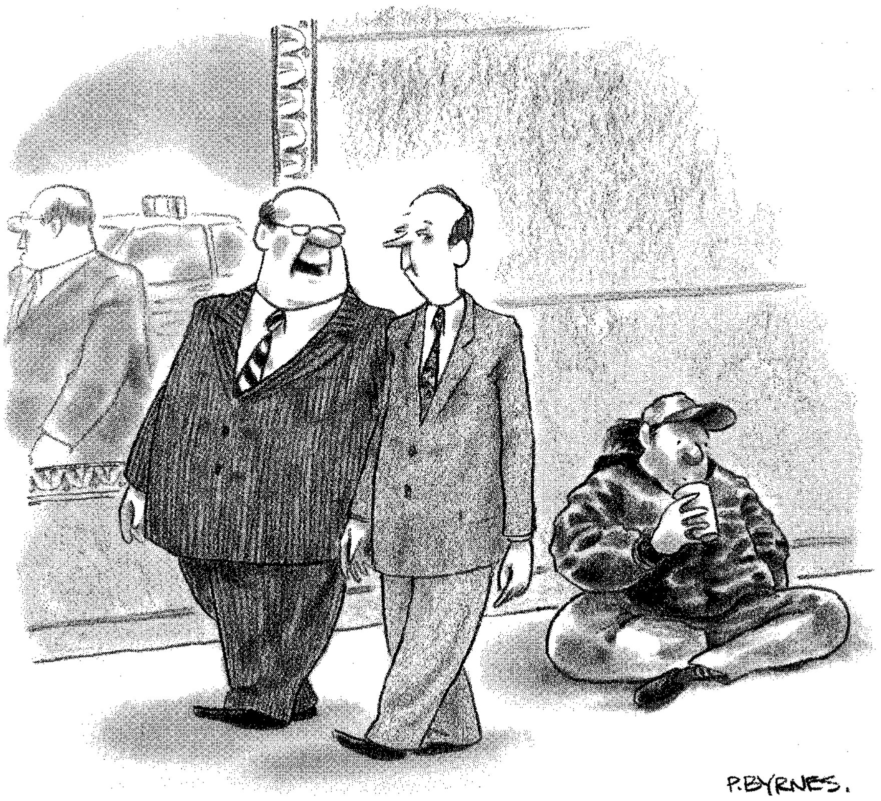
From countercultural origins, the organic-food business has grown into a $15-billion industry. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

The plastic package of Earthbound Farm baby arugula in Whole Foods was grown without synthetic fertilizers; no toxic pesticides or fumigants were used to control insect predators; no herbicides were applied to deal with weeds; no genes from other species were introduced into its genome to increase yield or pest resistance; no irradiation was used to extend its shelf life. It complies with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program, a set of standards that came into full effect in 2002 to regulate the commercial use of the word "organic." So what's the problem?

It all depends on what you think you're buying when you buy organic. If the word conjures up the image of a small, family-owned, local operation, you may be disappointed. Like Whole Foods, Earthbound Farm is a very big business. Earthbound's founders, Drew and Myra Goodman, Manhattanites who went to college in the Bay Area, and then started a two-and-a-half-acre raspberry-and-baby-greens farm near Carmel to produce food they "felt good about," are now the nation's largest grower of organic produce, with revenues for this year projected at more than $450 million. Their greens, including the arugula, are produced on giant farms in six different counties in California, two in Arizona, one in Colorado, and in three Mexican states. Earthbound grows more than seventy per cent of all the organic lettuce sold in America; big organic retailers like Whole Foods require big organic suppliers. (Earthbound actually dropped the "organic" specification when it started its mass-distribution program, in 1993—even though the stuff *was* organic—because its first client, Costco, thought it might put customers off.) By 2004, Earthbound was farming twenty-six thousand acres; its production plants in California and Arizona total four hundred thousand square feet, and its products are available in supermarkets in every state of the Union. The Carmel Valley farm stand is still there, largely for public-relations purposes, and is as much an icon of California's entrepreneurial roots as the Hewlett-Packard garage in downtown Palo Alto.

Success is not necessarily a sin, of course, and, for many people, buying



"I much prefer random acts of kindness to the habitual ones."

organic is a way of being environmentally sensitive. Earthbound notes that its farming techniques annually obviate the use of more than a quarter of a million pounds of toxic chemical pesticides and almost 8.5 million pounds of synthetic fertilizers, which saves 1.4 million gallons of the petroleum needed to produce those chemicals. Their tractors even use biodiesel fuel.

Yet the net benefit of all this to the planet is hard to assess. Michael Pollan, who thinks that we ought to take both a wider and a deeper view of the social, economic, and physical chains that deliver food to fork, cites a Cornell scientist's estimate that growing, processing, and shipping one calorie's worth of arugula to the East Coast costs fifty-seven calories of fossil fuel. The growing of the arugula is indeed organic, but almost everything else is late-capitalist business as usual. Earthbound's compost is trucked in; the salad-green farms are models of West Coast monoculture, laser-levelled fields facilitating awesomely efficient mechanical harvesting; and the whole supply chain from California to Manhattan is only four per cent less gluttonous a consumer of fossil fuel than that of a conventionally grown head of iceberg lettuce—though Earthbound plants trees to offset some of its carbon footprint. "Organic," then, isn't necessarily "local," and neither "organic" nor "local" is necessarily "sustainable."

Earthbound and other large-scale organic growers have embraced not only the logic of capitalism but the specific logic of California agribusiness. Julie Guthman's book shows how, ever since the gold rush, the state's growers have aimed at maximizing monetary yield per acre. First, it was wheat to feed the influx of gold miners and those dependent on the mining industry; then, after railways and refrigerated cars enabled the delivery of shining fresh produce across the country, it was orchard fruit. Later still, tract housing and mini-malls proved more profitable, which is why you'll have a hard time finding orange groves in Orange County. Guthman writes that big, concentrated, high-value organic agriculture in California is "the legacy of the state's own style of agrarian capitalism." You saw this style in action when, in 1989, a "60 Minutes" exposé about residues of the carcinogenic pesticide Alar found on apples caused a consumer stampede to the organic-produce bins. "Don't panic, buy organic," was the mantra, and growers responded by borrowing heavily to expand their organic enterprises. When the scare subsided, supply outstripped demand, and, in the inevitable shakeout, some small-scale organic farmers had to sell out to larger players in the food industry. Washington State's Cascadian Farm was one such. Its founder, a "onetime hippie" named Gene Kahn, sold a majority holding to Welch's, and now it is a division of the $17.8 billion giant General Mills. He hasn't the least regret: "We're part of the food industry now." The investors bankrolling Big Organic have no reason to fear the vestigial hippie rhetoric: it's not so much a counterculture as a bean-counter culture.

According to Samuel Fromartz, ninety per cent of "frequent" organic buyers think they're buying better "health and nutrition." They may be right. If, for any reason, you don't want the slightest pesticide residue in your salad, or you want to insure that there are no traces of recombinant bovine somatotropin hormone (rbST) in your children's milk, you're better off spending the extra money for organically produced food. But scientific evidence for the risks of such residues is iffy, as it is, too, for the benefits of the micronutrients that are said to be more plentiful in an organic carrot than in its conventional equivalent.

Other people are buying taste, but there's little you can say about other people's taste in carrots and not much more you can intelligibly articulate about your own. The taste of an heirloom carrot bought five years ago from the Chino family farm in Rancho Santa Fe, California, sticks indelibly in my memory, though at the time I hadn't any idea whether artificial fertilizers or pesticides had been applied to it. (I later learned that they had not.) For many fruits and vegetables, freshness, weed control, and the variety grown may be far more important to taste than whether the soil in which they were grown was dosed with ammonium nitrate. Pollan did his own taste test by shopping at Whole Foods for an all-organic meal: everything was pretty good, except for the six-dollar bunch of organic asparagus, which had been grown in Argentina, air-freighted six thousand miles to the States, and immured for a week in the distribution chain. Pollan shouldn't have been surprised that it tasted like "cardboard."

The twentieth-century origins of the organic movement can be traced to the writings of the English agronomist Sir Albert Howard, particularly his 1940 book "An Agricultural Testament." Howard was a critic of the rise of scientific agriculture. In the mid-nineteenth century, following the work of the German chemist Justus von Liebig, it was thought that all plants really needed from the soil was the correct quantities and proportions of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium: the N-P-K ratios that you see on bags of garden fertilizer. For many crops, it is the availability of nitrogen that limits growth. Legumes apart, plants cannot extract nitrogen directly from the practically unlimited stores of the gas in the atmosphere, so farmers in the nineteenth century routinely enhanced soil fertility using animal manures, guano, or mined nitrates. But, just before the First World War, the German chemist Fritz Haber and the industrialist Carl Bosch devised a way of synthesizing ammonia from atmospheric nitrogen. From there, the commercial production of enormous quantities of nitrogenous fertilizers was a relatively easy matter. The result was a technological revolution in agriculture.

But Howard had worked in India as "Imperial Economic Botanist" to the government of the Raj at Pusa, and his experiences there convinced him that traditional Indian farming techniques were in many respects superior to those of the modern West. Howard was a pragmatist—the criterion of agricultural success was what worked—but he was also a holist and a taker of the long view. The health of the soil, the health of what grew in it, and the health of those who ate what grew in it were "one great subject." To reduce this intricacy to a simple set of chemical inputs, as Liebig's followers did, was reductionist science at its worst. Soils treated this way would ultimately collapse, and so would the societies that abused them: "Artificial manures lead inevitably to artificial nutrition, artificial food, artificial animals and finally to artificial men and women," racked with disease and physically stunted. You could indeed get short-term boosts in yield through the generous application of synthetic fertilizers, but only by robbing future generations of their patrimony. Soil, Howard wrote, is "the capital of the nations which is real, permanent, and independent of everything except a market for the products of farming." We have no choice but to go "back to nature" and to "safeguard the land of the Empire from the operations of finance." The "supremacy of the West" depends upon it.

Howard's ideas reached America largely through J. I. Rodale's magazine *Organic Gardening and Farming*, and, later, through a widely read essay by Wendell Berry in "The Last Whole Earth Catalogue." The organic movement that sprang up in America during the postwar years, manured by the enthusiasm of both the hippies and their New Age successors, supplemented Howard's ideas of soil health with the imperative that the scale should be small and the length of the food chain from farm to consumer short. You were supposed to *know* who it was that produced your food, and to participate in a network of trust in familiar people and transparent agricultural practices. A former nutritionist at Columbia, who went on to grow produce upstate, recalls, "When we said organic, we meant local. We meant healthful. We meant being true to the ecologies of regions. We meant mutually respectful growers and eaters. We meant social justice and equality."

There is no way to make food choices without making moral choices as well, and anthropologists have had much to say about the inevitable link between what's good to eat and what's good to think. Decisions about how we want our food produced and delivered are decisions about what counts as social virtue. One of the founding texts of modern social theory, Émile Durkheim's "The Division of Labor in Society," drew a distinction between what he called mechanical and organic solidarity. In societies characterized by mechanical solidarity, each person knew pretty much what every other person did and each social unit encompassed pretty much all the functions it needed in order to survive. Mechanical solidarity, in Durkheim's scheme, was largely a premodern form. By contrast, organic solidarity flowed from the division of labor. Individuals depended upon one another for the performance of specialized tasks, and, as modernity proceeded, the networks of dependence that bound them together became increasingly anonymous. You didn't know who grew the food at the end of your fork, or, indeed, who made the fork. But, then, the original English sense of "organ" was an instrument or a machine made up of interdependent specialized parts, as in the musical pipe organ. The application to living things came only later, by way of analogy with machines; the eye, for example, is the "organ of seeing." And so, by semantic inversion, champions of organic farming actually seek virtue not in organic but in mechanical solidarity.

The quest for the shortest possible chain between producer and consumer is the narrative dynamic of Michael Pollan's book, which is cleverly structured around four meals, each representing a different network of relations between producers, eaters, and the environment, and each an attempt at greater virtue than the last. Pollan's first meal is fast food, and he follows a burger back to vast monocultural industrial blocs of Iowan corn, planted by G.P.S.-guided tractors and dosed with tons of synthetic fertilizer, whose massive runoff into the Mississippi River—as much as 1.5 million tons of nitrogen a year—winds up feeding algal blooms and depleting the oxygen needed by other forms of life in the Gulf of Mexico. Pollan then follows the corn to enormous feedlots in Kansas, where a heifer that he bought in South Dakota is speed-fattened—fourteen pounds of corn for each pound of edible beef—for which its naturally grass-processing rumen was not designed, requiring it to be dosed with antibiotics, which breed resistant strains of bacteria. Pollan would have liked to follow his heifer through the industrial slaughterhouse, but the giant beef-packing company was too canny to let him in, and so we are spared the stomach-churning details, which, in any case, were minutely related a few years ago in Eric Schlosser's "Fast Food Nation." Pollan also follows the American mountains of industrial corn into factories, where the wonders of food technology transform it into the now ubiquitous high-fructose corn syrup, which sweetens the soda that, consumed in super-sized quantities across the nation, contributes to the current epidemic of type 2 diabetes. All very bad things.

The second meal is the Big Organic one that he bought at his local Whole Foods store in California, featuring an "organic" chicken whose "free-range" label was authorized by U.S.D.A. statutes, but which actually shared a shed with twenty thousand other genetically identical birds. Two small doors in the shed opened onto a patch of grass, but they remained shut until the birds were five or six weeks old, and two weeks later Pollan's "free range" chicken was a $2.99-a-pound package in his local Whole Foods. This meal was better—the corn-and-soybean chicken feed was certified organic and didn't contain antibiotics—but still not perfect. Pollan's third meal was even more virtuous. After spending several weeks doing heavy lifting on a polycultural, sustainable smallholding in the Shenandoah Valley, Pollan cooked a meal wholly made up of ingredients that he himself had a hand in producing: eggs from (genuinely) free-range, grub-eating hens, corn grown with compost from those happy birds, and, finally, a chicken whose throat he had slit himself. Very good, indeed—and no nitrogenous runoff, and no massive military machine to protect America's supplies of Middle East oil and the natural gas needed to make the synthetic fertilizer.

Finally, Pollan decides to eat a meal—"the perfect meal"—for which he had almost total personal responsibility: wild morels foraged in the Sierra foothills, the braised loin and leg of a wild pig he had shot himself in Sonoma County, a chamomile tisane made from herbs picked in the Berkeley Hills, salad greens from his own garden, cherries taken by right of usufruct from a neighbor's tree, sea salt scraped from a pond at the southern end of San Francisco Bay, and—O.K., strict perfection is unobtainable—a bottle of California Petite Sirah, presumably organic. This was not a way of eating that Pollan thinks is realistic on a routine basis, but he wanted to test what it felt like to have "a meal that is eaten in full consciousness of what it took to make it." That consciousness, for Pollan, is more religious than political—every meal a sacrament. "We eat by the grace of nature, not industry, and what we're eating is never anything more or less than the body of the world," he says.

Pollan winds up demanding that we know much more about what we're putting into our mouths: "What it is we're eating. Where it came from. How it found its way to our table. And what, in a true accounting, it really cost." The "naked lunch," William Burroughs wrote, is the "frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork." Burroughs meant it metaphorically; Pollan means it literally. He wants to know his farmer's name, and to know that his hamburger was once part of the muscles of a particular cow. He wants to do his bit to save the planet. That means he wants to eat locally, within a network of familiarity. But, even so, the knowledge required is potentially infinite. What particular bacteria, fungi, and trace elements lurk in the soil of your sustainable community farm? Does your friendly local farmer use a tractor or a horse? If a tractor, does it use fuel made from biomass? If a horse, are the oats it eats organic? If the oats are organic, does the manure with which they were grown come from organically fed animals? How much of this sort of knowledge can you digest?

Pollan seems aware of the contradictions entailed in trying to eat in this rigorously ethical spirit, but he doesn't give much space to the most urgent moral problem with the organic ideal: how to feed the world's population. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a serious scare about an imminent Malthusian crisis: the world's rapidly expanding population was coming up against the limits of agricultural productivity. The Haber-Bosch process averted disaster, and was largely responsible for a fourfold increase in the world's food supply during the twentieth century. Earl Butz, Nixon's Secretary of Agriculture, was despised by organic farmers, but he might not have been wrong when he said, in 1971, that if America returned to organic methods "someone must decide which fifty million of our people will starve!" According to a more recent estimate, if synthetic fertilizers suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth, about two billion people would perish.

Supporters of organic methods maintain that total food-energy productivity per acre can be just as high as with conventional agriculture, and that dousings of N-P-K are made necessary only by the industrial scale of modern agriculture and its long-chain systems of distribution. Yet the fact remains that, to unwind conventional agriculture, you would have to unwind some highly valued features of the modern world order. Given the way the world now is, sustainably grown and locally produced organic food is expensive. Genetically modified, industrially produced monocultural corn is what feeds the victims of an African famine, not the gorgeous organic technicolor Swiss chard from your local farmers' market. Food for a "small planet" will, for the foreseeable future, require a much smaller human population on the planet.

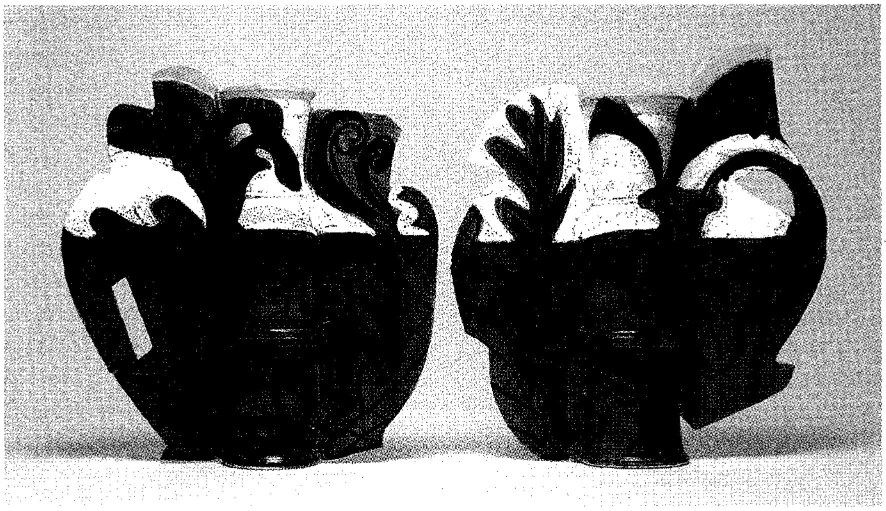
Besides, for most consumers that Earthbound Farm organic baby arugula from Whole Foods isn't an opportunity to dismantle the infrastructures of the modern world; it's simply salad. Dressed with a little Tuscan extra-virgin olive oil, a splash of sherry vinegar, some shavings of Parmigiano Reggiano, and *fleur de sel* from the Camargue, it makes a very nice appetizer. To insist that we are consuming not just salad but a vision of society isn't wrong, but it's biting off more than most people are able and willing to chew. Cascadian Farm's Gene Kahn, countering the criticism that by growing big he had sold out, volunteered his opinion on the place that food has in the average person's life: "This is just lunch for most people. *Just lunch.* We can call it sacred, we can talk about communion, but it's just lunch." ♦

THE ART WORLD

DECORATION MYTHS

Betty Woodman's ceramics.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



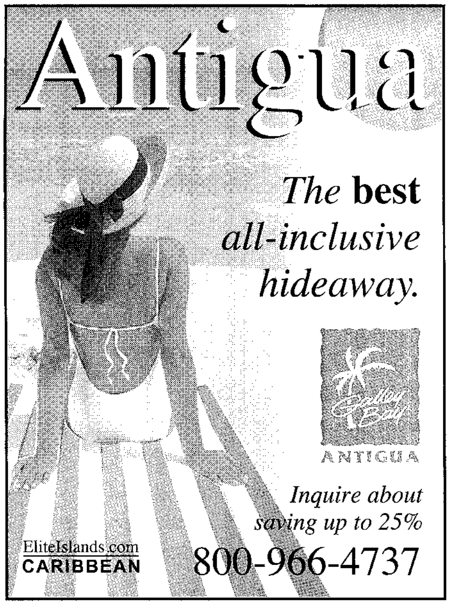
A set of Woodman vases, titled "The Portuguese in Japan" (2000).

COURTESY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

"Too Matissey," a woman complained while viewing the spectacular Betty Woodman retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum, a show that, on the day that I saw it, piqued a good deal of chat among strangers. The profusion of ceramic vessels and abstracted images of vessels, ranging from teacups to vast installations, shocks with aggressive forms and blazing colors, and its obvious, hellbent determination to please solicits opinion. None of the work is too Matisse-like. Though the master of color is very much evoked, nothing could less reflect his ideal that art should be like a good armchair than Woodman's rough-and-tumble theatricality. The show can put you in mind, too, of Picasso, Miró, and Joan Mitchell, and of Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism—elements of modernity that, over a half-century career, Woodman has thoroughly rethought in low-fired clay. At the age of seventy-six, she is beyond original, all the way to sui generis. She has been well known in art circles since the nineteen-seventies, when her work was associated (incorrectly but advantageously, given the art world's chronic disdain for anything that smacks of "craft") with a briefly fashionable movement called Pattern and Decoration. A dearth of wider fame is due to the strangeness of her project, which entails a simultaneous emphasis on painting and sculpture in a disrespected medium, with references to arcane Mediterranean and Asian decorative traditions. An approving critic, on this occasion, is tasked with discovering significant questions to which Woodman's art is the right answer. How can something be important that seems, at first blush, so capricious?

Start in the Met's entrance hall, where the massive, banal urns that are routinely filled with bouquets of fresh flowers have been replaced, for now, with Woodmans: cylindrical vases fronted with flat, jaggedly cut out slabs bearing glazed and painted, shattered representations of vase forms. When I was there (the arrangements change, week to week), masses of cherry blossoms, lilies, and subtly accenting blue-green eucalyptus complemented such opulent hues as, in a vase titled "Portugal," an indigo like an organ chord, at once rumbling and clarion. It's only décor, but what décor! I found myself reflecting, glumly, on the timid or arch character of most decoration today. Since decoration is art that is meant not to be looked at directly but to be taken in peripherally, Woodman's work may seem overqualified, in its peremptory splendors. But, in effect, the work dreams of a world in which beautiful invention is to be expected, as an aesthetic civil right. It's not Woodman's fault that the rest of the culture won't perform at her level—though the rest of the Met certainly does. Leaving the show, I wandered into the museum's collections of Italian Renaissance and ancient Greek pottery with eyes pried open. Those pieces were made not to be pedestalled, as treasures, but to enhance lived protocols of perception and feeling. I also checked in with Matisse. Woodman is indeed a comparable colorist. Her conjunctions of high-keyed and earthen shades, often with swift black lines and chalk-white grounds, first startle, then gladden. She lacks Matisse's Arcadian harmony—her color jangles—but this is not a failure so much as an authentic note of an American sensibility too restless and pragmatic to dawdle in regions of *calme, luxe, et volupté.*

Born Elizabeth Abrahams, Woodman became a potter at an early age, in her home town of Newton, Massachusetts, where her father worked for a supermarket and her mother for Jewish charities. She was enchanted by the alchemy of glazes: drab when brushed on, brilliant when they came out of the kiln. In 1948, she entered the celebrated ceramics program of Alfred University, in western New York, where she absorbed—but always resisted—the gospel of Japanese-influenced functionalism preached by the Englishman Bernard Leach, who was then preëminent in the field. While teaching pottery two years later, in Boston, she met her future husband, the painter and photographer George Woodman, who regularly decorated her pots, until she took over that job, in the early seventies. They lived in Boulder, Colorado, where George taught, and they had two children. They moved to New York in 1980. She joined the Max Protetch Gallery, which is committed to crosscurrents of art, architecture, and design, in 1983. (A terrific show of her pieces there, which runs through the end of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this month, confirms that she is now doing her best work.) The late furniture sculptor and radical aesthetician Scott Burton, who disparaged distinctions between art and utility, encouraged her ambition—she has said that she finally dared to think of herself as an artist, period, around that time. The Woodmans now divide their year between a loft on West Seventeenth Street and a hilltop house in Antella, Italy, with a view of Florence.

Woodman is an omnivore of ceramics traditions, among them Etruscan pots, Italian majolica, the Baroque, Tang-dynasty glaze techniques, Islamic tiles, Okinawan folk pottery, and Moorish-Spanish ware. The Mississippi potter George Ohr is also a likely influence. But she resents being termed a "ceramicist," quite properly, in that her work is superior to even the best professional ceramics as art, yet it's impossible as craft. It's hard to think of a principle of good potting that she doesn't violate. To make her slab forms—which sprout like eccentric wings from the sides of many of her vases, glued on with epoxy—she throws platterlike expanses on a large wheel, then stretches and cuts them. The slabs crack frequently, and she repairs them with flattened globs of the same clay. (You can tell the patches by the imprints of her shoe soles.) Colors that she can't achieve with glaze are slathered on in paint. More generally, Woodman trashes an aesthetic cynosure of ceramics: tactility. What we identify as fine art functions at a middle distance, where eyesight is most efficient. Ceramics claim space within arm's reach, where vision blends with touch. The arid, rough surfaces of Woodman's earthenware give exploring fingers scant welcome. (You mustn't touch, of course; but you wouldn't want to.) Her anti-craftsiness sharply distinguishes her from another major ceramic artist, Ken Price, who exaggerates tactile seductiveness and chromatic beauty at the same time; his parti-color, glass-smooth recent works are too well made for any conceivable human need. I'm a fan of ceramics, which should not require distortions as violent as Woodman's or Price's to merit serious consideration. But there it is, in a civilization that has gone numb to qualities of the handmade.

Hybridizing painting and sculpture was a collective project of avant-gardists in the nineteen-sixties. (Frank Stella's work has been forcing the issue ever since.) Woodman demonstrates that in this pursuit art aspires to the condition of ceramics, which naturally marries decorative surface to three-dimensional shape. She does so by deconstructing that unity, divorcing surface from shape as dramatically as possible. The sculptural character of her outsized, flamboyant vases is a given. (It is weaker in teacups, tureens, and other service genres; suggestions of dinner-table amenity plainly exasperate Woodman's belligerent muse. She is a vase artist, first and last.) She concentrates on aggrandizing the pictorial, to the point of incorporating actual paintings, in mediums including ceramic-slip glaze on paper or unstretched canvas, as grounds for wall reliefs of curved shards and shelved vessel forms. The marvellous "Roman Panel" is eighteen feet high. Suites of winged vases offer two viewing points, not front and back but front and front. Each side deploys a different over-all design that leaps the gaps between the vases. Her aim is to charge negative space—the air around her pieces—with active presence. It doesn't always work; sometimes shapes just sit or hang there. But the dynamic is miraculous in "Aeolian Pyramid," a stepped array of thirty-five big, slab-presenting vases of abstracted Greek design in black, yellow, and pale terra cotta. The composite keeps squeezing out real space, which keeps muscling back in. The result is a visual "Hallelujah" Chorus. The freshness, variety, and unquenchable inventiveness of her work at the Met, and in the show at Protetch, bespeak a great insight: that seemingly exhausted formal repertoires, such as those of canonical modern art, can be made brand-new by translation into an independent artistic language. ♦

DON'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT DEPARTMENT

From the Times.

Because of an editing error, a recipe last Wednesday for meatballs with an article about foods to serve during the Super Bowl misstated the amount of chipotle chilies in adobo to be used. It is one or two canned chilies, not one or two cans.

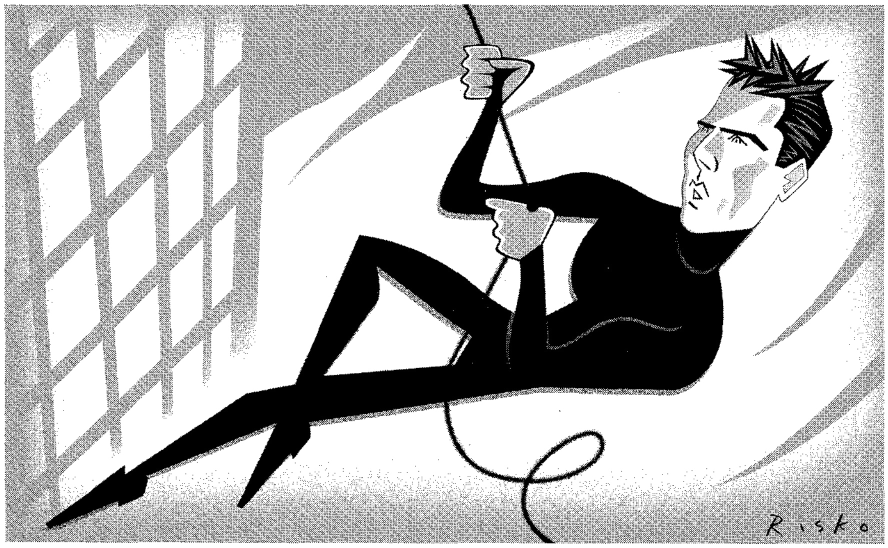
THE CURRENT CINEMA

SAVE US

"Mission: Impossible III."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The most telling moment in "Mission: Impossible III" occurs near the start. A team of special agents, including Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise), has flown to Berlin to rescue Agent Lindsey Farris (Keri Russell), who has been trapped and roughed up by a merciless foe. Groggy and lolling, she is in no fit state to travel, so Hunt, who likes to come prepared, whips out a syringe of adrenaline only slightly smaller than a bottle of Coors, and, with the encouraging words "You're going to feel this," jabs it home. Soon, she is up and about and busy with her gun. Pharmacologists will recall a comparable scene in "Pulp Fiction," where John Travolta pumped the same substance into Uma Thurman's sternum with a view to making her even funkier than she was before. This is no coincidence. If you are Quentin Tarantino or J. J. Abrams, the director of "M:i:III," these injections are a sharp, traumatizing symbol of your plan to keep moviegoers on their toes. Hero is to heroine as director is to audience, and the filmmakers' only fear is that the adrenaline might run dry.

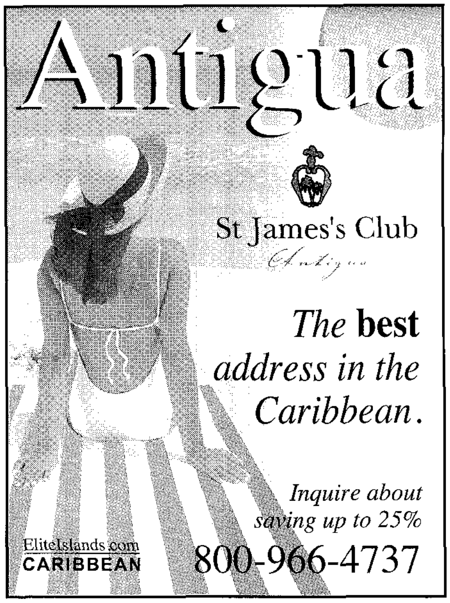


Tom Cruise as special agent Ethan Hunt in J. J. Abrams's movie.

ROBERT RISKO

Much has changed for Ethan since his last appearance. He has had his hair cut, and, for the first time, we are granted a unique, behind-the-scenes look at his private life. We learn that he is Ethan *Matthew* Hunt—an oddly softening touch, like finding out that James Bond's middle name was Tarquin. We also see Ethan at his engagement party; he is marrying Julia (Michelle Monaghan), who works in a hospital and thinks that he works for the traffic section of the Virginia Department of Transportation. In fact, as he reveals to her at the end, Ethan is secretly in the pay of the I.M.F. Pushing his luck, he claims that I.M.F. stands for Impossible Mission Force, but that's just silly. You and I know perfectly well that I.M.F. stands for International Monetary Fund. All this while, it seems, after a hard day's spying, he was going back to the office to finish off those tricky agriculture subsidies for Bangladesh.

Whatever the case, the job entails a serious racking up of air miles. Once Ethan and the gang—Declan (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), the statuesque Zhen (Maggie Q), and, back by popular de-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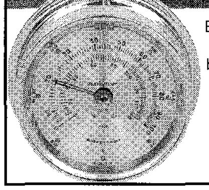
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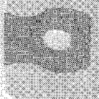
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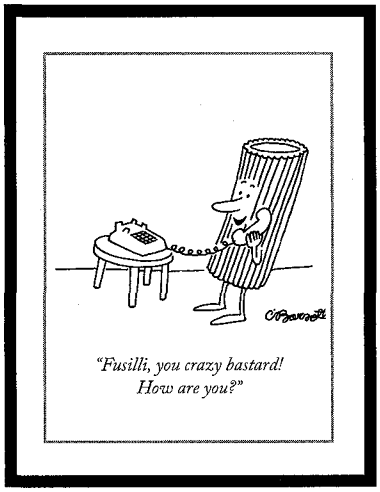
"Fusilli, you crazy bastard! How are you?"

Charles Barsotti, 1994

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mand, Luther (Ving Rhames)—have returned from Berlin, they barely have time to wash their socks and feed the cat before heading off to Rome. Returning from there, they don't even make it to the office, having the misfortune, while crossing the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, to run into a barrage of air-to-ground missiles fired by a pilotless drone. I hate it when that happens. Ethan, as a leading scholar of road congestion, seems especially annoyed, and his solution is to get arrested, escape, and scoot off to Shanghai. Some viewers will mock his itchy-footed wanderings, but I would defend such restlessness, which reaches back, through the jet-set kitsch of the Bond pictures, through Hitchcock (who was never embarrassed by a major tourist site), all the way to "Morocco" and "Shanghai Express." Even in a movie as snarling and relentlessly modern as "M:i:III," it reminds us of something primitive and half-innocent in the act of moviegoing: our desire to be ushered around the world without leaving our seats, even though we will be none the wiser for our journey, and even though the world we encounter will be, at best, a comic simulacrum of the real thing.

Hence our pleasure at seeing Ethan in the cassock of an Italian priest, strolling through the gardens of the Vatican. This is the prelude to a headlong passage of action—the unmistakable core of the movie—in which the team invades the Holy City in a bid to kidnap Owen Davian (Philip Seymour Hoffman), who has been identified as the most dangerous ginger-haired threat to global peace. He is on a sales trip, expecting to make eight hundred and fifty million dollars from something called the Rabbit's Foot. I was never sure what the Foot consisted of, or who, if anyone, had assumed the role of the Rabbit, but it has to do with a small vacuum flask containing either a deadly, population-wiping serum or a skinny mochaccino to go. The mission involves a disposable orange Lamborghini, the cardinal-trumping sight of Zhen in a little red dress, and, on a less happy note, an explosive disguised as a crucifix. I can think of other faiths whose followers would riot for less.

The man of God is but one of many disguises that Ethan adopts in the course of the story, each more ridiculous than the last. Of particular note is the bespectacled, knit-hatted Asian hippie he becomes for all of twenty seconds, in order to beat airport security. There were two reasons for the gust of giggles that swept through the screening I attended: first, no customs official would be fooled by such camouflage; and, second, whenever Cruise dresses up as somebody else he manages to look more, not less, like Tom Cruise. To say that there is no trace of chameleon in his bloodstream should not be construed as a criticism; many leading men, from Gary Cooper on down, have forged long careers on the strength of their monolithic charms. People went back for more Cooper, as they would for a refill, because they knew what they were getting. Whether Cruise is equally dependable is a matter of controversy, and "M:i:III," alert to the debate, sneaks in a knowing exchange. Ethan is discussing traffic flow, and the guy beside him waits until he drifts away, then gives a hammy snore. Not so a couple of women, listening in. "I'd marry him," one says. The other adds, "Me, too."

Since the last installment of "Mission: Impossible," Cruise has found somebody to marry him for real, and to bear his child. This scarcely unusual news would hardly be worth rehearsing, were it not for the kinks and wavers that have been observed in the arc of his stardom—and "M:i:III," like many blockbusters, would be nothing without its star. The Cruise fan base has been shaken by a number of public pronouncements, although some of us have merely been confirmed in our original suspicions that there was something about this actor that was not quite of this earth. The stiff-necked jerk of his motions; the grit of his bared teeth; the eyes switched to perennial full beam but never quite blinking, even during tears; his ability to remain totally upright when sprinting, as if carrying an invisible egg and spoon—what are these, if not the techniques of an alien life force who has just graduated summa cum laude in advanced human behavior? Just who was scared of whom, precisely, in last year's "War of the Worlds"?

"M:i:III" can itself be read as a course in Cruisemanship. For lovers of "Top Gun," there is the spectacle of Ethan riding a motorbike to a waiting aircraft.

For those who prefer "Cocktail" and "Jerry Maguire," there are a couple of scenes, topping and tailing the movie, in which we receive a blast of his trademark grin, the one that signals, "Check *me* out." That perkiness has always dimly reminded me of some other cultural figure of note, and finally, midway through this movie, I got it: SpongeTom CruisePants! Like our submarine friend, Cruise tends to outshine the surrounding creatures. The wasting of Michelle Monaghan, for instance—so quick and luscious in "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang," so mopey here—is indefensible, not unlike the paltry use of Lalo Schifrin's theme, which is only the most contagious tune ever heard by mortal ears. Still, all credit to Cruise for pitting himself, at last, against one of the few actors who can make him quail. Even as he hangs Philip Seymour Hoffman upside down out of a plane, there remains a glint of power in those beady Hoffman eyes—the certainty that, however windblown, he will rise again.

To be honest, I prefer the Hoffman of "M:i:III" to the Oscar winner of "Capote." The role of Owen Davian, though underwritten, is more of a piece and less of a turn than his chirruping Truman Capote. Say what you like about Davian; he may sell dirty bombs to Middle Eastern regimes and torture an American female agent, but at least he doesn't drag William Shawn along to watch. As for the sequence in which Hoffman pretends to be Tom Cruise pretending to be Philip Seymour Hoffman, most of us would call a personal-injury lawyer, or perhaps a libel specialist, but Hoffman doesn't flinch. I suspect that his one disappointment, when he views the finished product, will be the scrappiness of the ending. J. J. Abrams, who in many ways does a smarter job with the franchise than Brian De Palma and John Woo did before him, seems to lose steam along the way, as if his schooling in television drama—he was the prime mover of "Alias" and "Lost"—has deprived him of the stamina for the longer, two-hour haul. The reported budget for Abrams's film was a hundred and fifty million dollars, but it looked to me as if, somewhere in Shanghai, the director ran out of cash. We are primed for Ethan's retrieval of the Rabbit's Foot, but all we get is his spectacular arrival, not the theft itself: out he hops with the booty in his paw, and that's that. And the grand finale? A fistfight, after which somebody gets run over. Listen, if I want to see that kind of action, I don't go to Shanghai. I don't even go to the movies. I go to the South Bronx and stand outside a bar. Roll on the climax of "M:i:IV," in which, rumor has it, Agent Hunt will stumble out of bed to feed the baby, trip over the stroller in the hall, and break his nose. ♦

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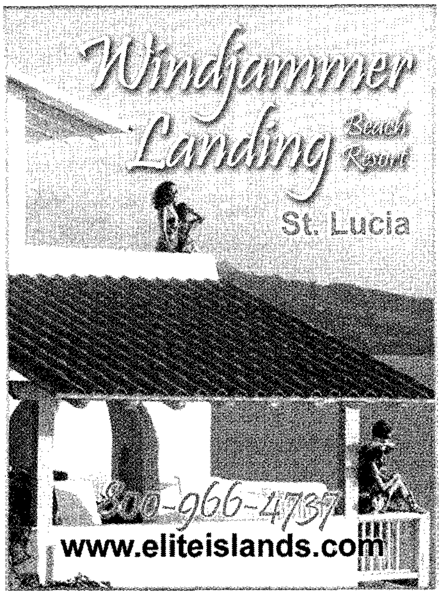

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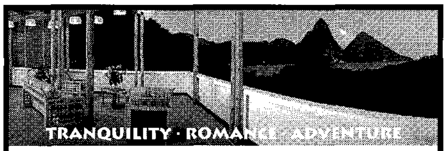
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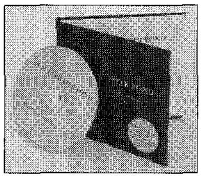
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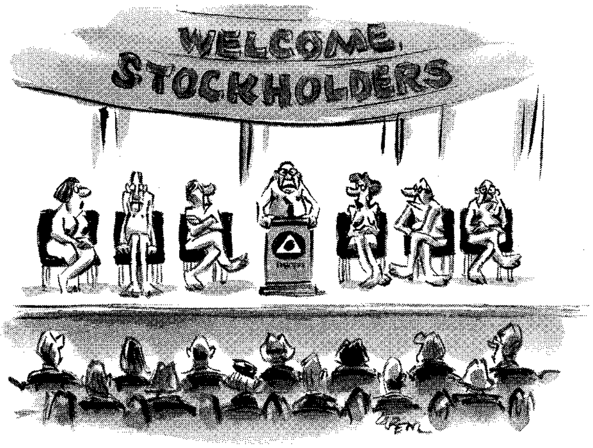
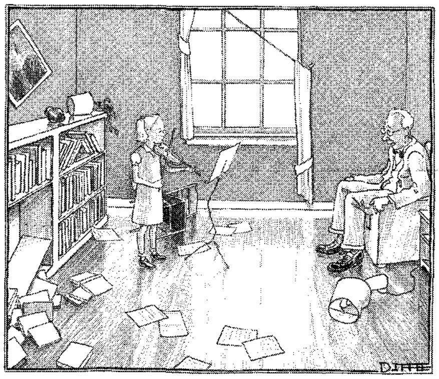
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Victoria Roberts, must be received by Sunday, May 14th. Finalists in the May 1st contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the May 29th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"First, I'd like to thank the podium."
Brendan Hasenstab, Brooklyn, N.Y.



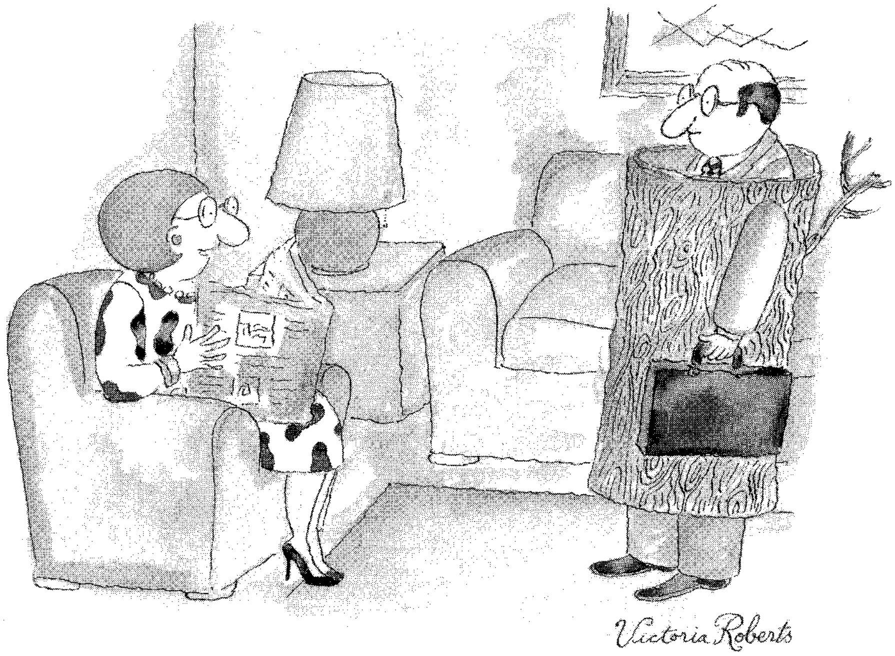
THE FINALISTS

"O.K., this time with a little less feeling."
Sherman Ross, Houston, Texas

"Gosh, Wendy, that was more like 'The Flight of the Whole Hive.' "
Fred Antonelli, Sequim, Wash.

"Yes, dear, I'm sure your grandmother can hear you in Heaven."
Paul Schultheis, Nashville, Ind.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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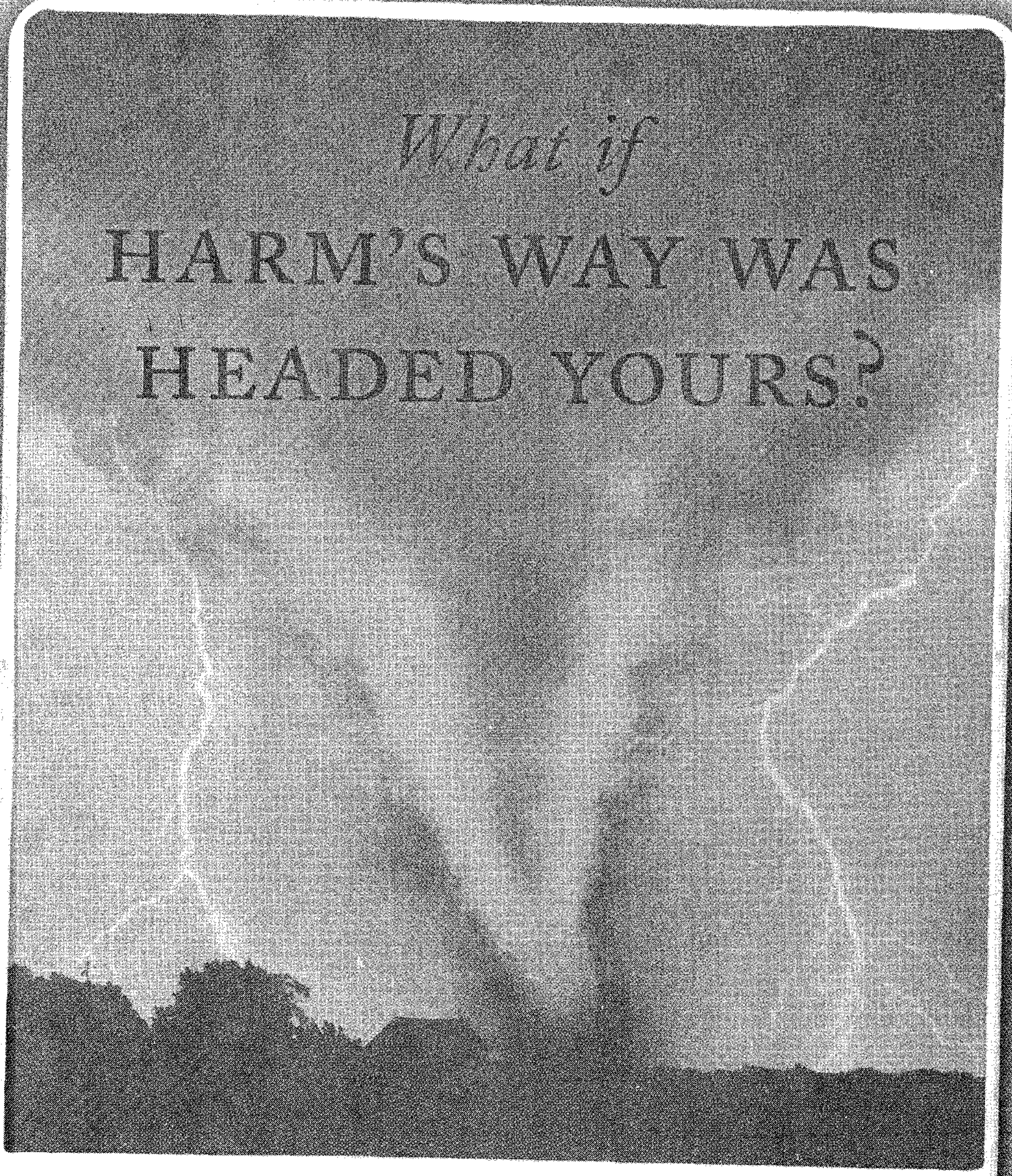

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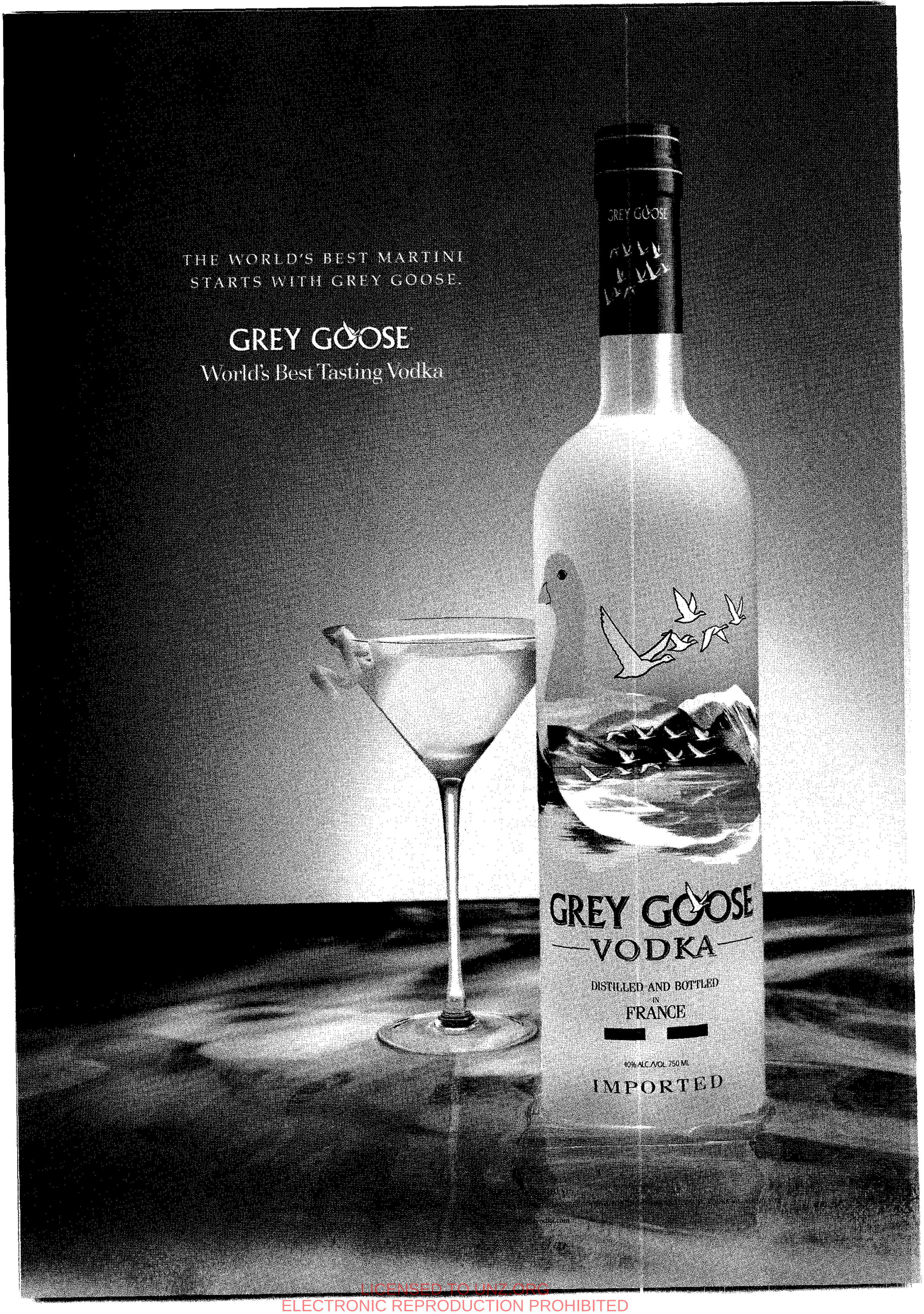
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